

JANE AUSTEN AND HER CLASS

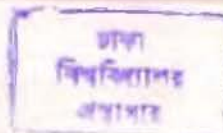
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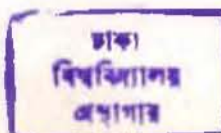
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INTRODUCTION

The term 'class' began to be used "in its most important modern sense, from about 1740," and it is only at "the end of the eighteenth century that the modern structure of 'class,' in its social sense, begins to be built up."¹ It is obvious, of course, that the new use of 'class' does not indicate the beginning of social divisions in England. But "it indicates, quite clearly, a change in the character of these divisions, and it records, equally clearly, a change in attitude towards them."² Jane Austen was quite aware of this social evolution, and a class-society crystallizes in her works. Her interest in class society is so intense that she uses the very new term 'class' in its modern sense, at least once, in making a comparison between the social position of the Musgroves and that of their relations, the Hayters in her Persuasion :

Mrs Musgrove and Mrs Hayter were sisters. They had each had money, but their marriages had made a material difference in their degree of consequence. Mr Hayter had some property of his own, but it was insignificant compared with Mr Musgrove's : and while the Musgroves were in the first class of society in the country, the young Hayters would, from their parents' inferior, retired, and unpolished way of living, and their own defective education, have been hardly in any class at all, but for their connexion with Uppercross;... (ch. 9)

1. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780 - 1950, (Penguin, 1963), pp. 14-15

2. Ibid. p. 15

Although Jane Austen does not use the term 'class' in her other novels, she takes particular interest in investing her characters with their class features. She tells us of their income, birth, social status and the like to designate their social class, and indicate the world to which they belong. She, very frequently, uses the words like 'sphere,' 'order,' 'inferior society,' 'superior society'¹ to identify the class position as well as boundaries of her characters. The presentation of such social division makes D. H. Lawrence abhor Jane Austen. In his 'Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover,' he mourns the loss of what he calls the 'curious blood-connection' that 'held the classes together' in the England of Defoe and Fielding. But

in the mean Jane Austen, it is gone. Already this old maid typifies "personality" instead of character, the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing in togetherness, and she is, to my feeling, thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the word, just as Fielding is English in the good, generous sense.²

It is true that Jane Austen makes no attempt to present a social panorama as Fielding, her predecessor, had done. To her "3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on."³ Consequently, her characters move either in their family circle

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1. Since the terms 'upper classes,' 'lower middle class,' etc. began to be used after the death of Jane Austen, we cannot expect these social terms in her writing. See Raymond Williams, Op. cit., p. 15
 2. Phoenix II, ed. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore, (London, 1968), p. 513
 3. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 401

or in the circle of their relations, friends, and acquaintances. This was, in fact, the social convention of her time. David Cecil observes: "She was a woman in an age when women were forbidden by convention from moving in any society except that in which they were born."¹ In view of such practical situation like this, Jane Austen, the realist, is not expected to present her characters in a way that Lawrence calls "knowing in togetherness." Brian Southam's succinct reply to the objection of Lawrence is acceptable :

Lawrence invokes a twentieth-century psychological romanticism, arbitrary but illuminating. During the later eighteenth century, English society lost the last vestiges of social unity, its paternalistic "blood-connexion," the better side of feudalism. By Jane Austen's day this had given way to a divisive class system with its elaborate snobberies of money and rank. To this extent the "knowing of apartness" that Lawrence identified in the novels is an authentic social experience, not solely a projection of some psychological apartness in Jane Austen's own makeup.²

Since her characters live in class society they move in their respective world, and hence, as David Daiches has noted, "it is pointless to criticize Jane Austen for the limitations she imposes on herself."³

1. Jane Austen, (Cambridge, 1935), p. 13

2. 'Jane Austen', British Writers Vol. IV, General ed. Ian Scott-Kolvert, (New York, 1981), p. 106.

3. 'Introduction', Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, (New York, 1950), X

Class attitude is of great importance in Jane Austen's works, and this provides us with a historically accurate picture of a dynamic society. But since 'class' is an indefinite social term, it connotes ambiguity in identifying the members of different classes. Encyclopaedia Britannica notes :

However although the economic basis of classes has been generally recognized, many disagreements have arisen as a result of attempts to define social class. There has been confusion about how widely the concept should be employed.¹

Because of disagreements and confusion over the definition of 'class', critics, very often, differ about the class position of Jane Austen in her society. Colin Swatridge says, "She grew up in an upper middle-class family"²; David Cecil views that she was born in "the smaller English gentry."³ Arnold Kettle terms her "a genteel bourgeoisie of the turn of the eighteenth century"⁴; Q. D. Leavis remarks that she is the "daughter of a rather poor middle-class country parson."⁵ It is, of course, possible to enjoy Jane Austen's novels without knowing much about her own class background, but it is necessary to know about her class position in order to understand her class attitude. Mary Eagleton is right in remarking that "the class origin of a writer is ... one of many ways in which class and fiction interpenetrate."⁶

1. 15th ed., vol. 16, p. 946

2. British Fiction A Student's A to Z, (London, 1985), p. 34

3. Op. cit., p. 13

4. An Introduction to the English Novel vol. 1, (London, 1957), p. 101

5. Collected Essays vol. 1, ed. G. Singh, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 26

6. Attitude to Class in the English Novel from Walter Scott to David Storey, (London, 1979), p. 14

The novelist's attitude to, and involvement in, class add to our understanding of, and interest in, the novels. Being particularly conscious of the position of her characters almost in every page Jane Austen tells us either of their class situation, or of class consciousness, or of class prejudice.

In her novels, Jane Austen presents heterogeneous social groupings ranging from the aristocratic families at the top to the tenant farmers and minor professionals at the bottom. Obviously, we cannot claim that Jane Austen and all of her characters belong to the same social order. Since the title of this thesis is Jane Austen and her Class, I feel it necessary to know with as much accuracy as possible about the novelist's own class position, and to identify those characters who have the same social standing as that of their creator. This is what I do in the first chapter, making, at the same time, an attempt to see Jane Austen's attitude towards, and assessment of, the people of her own class.¹

Jane Austen's novels are not only the stories of love and marriage but records of social problems, and of the sufferings of the people of her society. The second chapter -- which examines the fear of the people of the novelist's class in relation to the leisured class -- constitutes a substantial part of my thesis. Social fear and economic insecurity of ordinary people are striking features of class society. Here, I try to see how these affect her

1. In this thesis the term 'middle class' stands for Jane Austen's own class, and it does not include the members of the gentry who actually belong to the upper middle class.

characters in their everyday life. As a member of her society, Jane Austen shared the social and economic situation of the vast majority of English rural people and experienced various social fears as well. One of my intentions is to relate those to many of the incidents of her novels. Since the theme of fear has a tradition of its own in the English fiction, I find it necessary to discuss briefly the nature of the treatment of fear by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and also of the Gothic novelists, with a view to differentiating Jane Austen's apprehension and treatment of it. A sub-chapter on the fear of women has been added to emphasize the novelist's keen perception of the problems of women, and of their fears.

The next two chapters concentrate on two basic needs of human beings -- house (shelter) and education (improver of mind). Houses in her novels are different from one another; and each has a varying degree of emotional significance to its inhabitants. Out of the varying characteristics of different houses, my aim is to find out the features of a home that Jane Austen prefers for the people of her own class. I particularly want to explicate the importance of art and morality in the making of a home in her novels.

Although education is a common concern to all classes, Jane Austen thinks of the education of the people of her own class with especial attention. My study on her idea of education aims at showing that education is a life-long process in her works, and that her characters are hardly benefitted by their formal education. She brings into consideration how natural intelligence helps one to acquire liberal as well as comprehensive education. Jane Austen relates education with money and shows the effects of it on those

who have abundance of it, and who do not have adequate means to run their families smoothly.

Since the interaction between the leisured class and that of Jane Austen's own class forms the main current of her novels, the last chapter deals with the former class. The chapter introduces the members of the governing class, and examines the novelist's attitude to their behaviour with their social inferiors.

The thesis, in fact, explores Jane Austen's presentation as well as treatment of some of the important features of class society. It especially highlights the way of life of her own class in relation to the influential governing elite of that period. In this exploration, I think it appropriate to see how the novelist was influenced by her family as well as class background in writing her novels.

CHAPTER ONE : JANE AUSTEN'S CLASS

It is generally admitted that Jane Austen, the daughter of a rector, belongs to the middle class, and that she deals with her own class in her novels. This notion, however, equates the professionals with the gentry, since people of these two classes are primarily her main concern. If a social class is defined as "a group of persons who could have social intercourse on equal terms, so far as their age and sex allows,"¹ it is doubtful whether Jane Austen's characters belong to a single social class. For instead of harmony in their relationship, we find two-sided social opposition, and contrasting life-styles between the gentry and the professionals. And the inequality and conflicts of these two classes are often the focus of her novelistic attention.

In the prevailing agrarian economic system, the leisured class who governed their communities thought themselves superior to all other classes, and expected to be treated with the utmost deference. The professionals, on the other hand, conscious of the changing social circumstances demanded that they be given proper respect and attention. The question of the acceptance of the professional middle class as honourable social beings by the leisured class is, in fact, often the source of the conflict in Jane Austen's novels. For instance, in Emma, Mrs Elton -- a near connection of a tradesman -- and Emma -- who is the daughter of a gentry -- are unable to respect each other. Both of them "seek praise, wish to control others, and need to be recognised as first in importance."² Emma cannot accept Mr Elton,

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1. T. H. Pear, English Social Differences, (London, 1956), p. 43
 2. Bernard J. Paris, Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels, (Brighton, 1979), p. 75

the vicar, and the Coles, the tradesmen, as her social equals. Although these professional people have their own importance Emma is always inclined to avoid them. In all of Jane Austen's novels, the conflict between the gentry and the professionals (to whose class she herself belongs) is a remarkable feature, which conflict rises to the climax in Persuasion where Sir Walter Elliot and the naval officers confront each other most openly.

Jane Austen is fully aware of the realities of class position of her characters. Her characters display an acute sense of class consciousness vis-a-vis the outer world. It is because of this class consciousness that the Lucases, Mr Collins, the Steele sisters and the like cannot speak properly before the leisured class; while the gentry and the aristocracy usually display their supercilious and snobbish attitude before their inferiors. Whereas we feel that we know Jane Austen's own class position, it was not always easy to determine that of her characters in the context of the complicated social-class system of that period. Park Honan observes : "The social-class system of the Austen's England was delicately complex, and the boundaries between classes was hazy and obscure -- or far less rigidly fixed and plain than those in France. But everyone was conscious of class."¹ Where, for example, should we place Edmund Bertram in Mansfield Park and Henry Tilney in Northanger Abbey who are destined for the church, but have their own houses² and livings--

1. Jane Austen : Her Life, (London, 1987), p. 29

2. The houses are parsonages, and are very much inferior to the houses of the gentry. Mary Crawford does not like Thornton Lacey at all in Mansfield Park.

Edmund at Thorton Lacey, and Henry at Woodston ? Both are closely related to the gentry, but in the prevailing social scale it would not be proper to consider them members of the gentry as Goldwin Smith is inclined to do.¹ In Pride and Prejudice, the retired business man, Sir William Lucas, despite his knighthood, fears to move in superior society with ease. His title fails to raise him socially; and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, not an untypical representative of the leisured class, refuses to be impressed by him. In view of such complications regarding her characters' social standing, it would be useful for us to look at Jane Austen's own class position a little more closely, with a view to identifying her social equals amongst her characters.

Although Jane Austen is the daughter of a clergyman "she was distantly related to members of the landed gentry and the aristocracy."² Her father was the son of a surgeon, which profession at the beginning of the eighteenth century was regarded no more highly than the attorney's, but her forefathers

were an old family whose fortunes, like those of many of the greatest families in England, had been founded on the wool trade, which was at one time the country's staple industry; and having made money, again like others of greater importance, they had bought land and so, in course of time, joined the ranks of the landed gentry.³

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1. Goldwin Smith in his Life of Jane Austen (London, n.d.), p. 57, says, "There are the parish clergy, many of them connected with the gentry by family ties, as family livings have not ceased to exist, and all of them belonging to the gentry as an order."
 2. W. Somerset Maugham, Ten Novels and their Authors, (Melbourne, 1954), p. 45
 3. Ibid, p. 44

Her mother belonged to an aristocratic lineage -- the Leighs of Adlestrop in Gloucestershire, an elder branch of the family at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire.¹ On account of her parents' family background, (though they were not qualified by their own birth and fortune) they were allowed, in a way, to enjoy the company of the gentry and aristocracy. On the part of a clergyman's family, it is not very usual to get the opportunity of mixing with the people of the upper classes. But for the Austens it was not surprising that 'they were accepted' by the leisured class, and this is because of their old tradition. Yet it can be assumed that occasional invitations to the parties and balls do not signify that the Austens were treated on equal terms as the gentry and aristocracy were. In her minor works, many humble girls of ordinary station are invited to the parties, but they become the victims of the snobbery of the women of superior station. However, this opportunity enabled Jane Austen to gain insight into the way of life of the leisured class that she depicted so delightfully in her novels.

Her brother Edward, who was adopted by the wealthy and childless Thomas Knight, inherited his foster-father's estates in Kent and Hampshire. Edward married the daughter of Sir Brook Bridges of Goodnestone in Kent. Her brother's social linkage provided Jane Austen with the opportunity of observing the life of the gentry, an opportu-

1. F. B. Pinion, A Jane Austen Companion, (London, 1973), p. 3

nity she made excellent use of in writing her novels. It is known that she frequently visited her brother's house, and the houses of his in-laws. She did not fail to notice "snobbery, sham, pretence, airs, falsities and other little social monstrosities of attitude and behaviour in her brother's family, and, too, in Elizabeth's [Edward's wife] friends at Goodnestone and Godmersham Park."¹

J. E. Austen Leigh, Jane Austen's nephew, recollects that his grandfather and the members of his family indirectly enjoyed the status of a landed proprietor. Mr Knight who was the proprietor of nearly the whole parish of Steventon

never resided there, and consequently the rector and his children came to be regarded in the neighbourhood as a kind of representatives of the family. They shared with the principal tenant the command of an excellent manor, and enjoyed, in this reflected way, some of the consideration usually awarded to landed proprietors. They were not rich, but, aided by Mr Austen's powers of teaching, they had enough to afford a good education to their sons and daughters, to mix in the best society of the neighbourhood, and to exercise a liberal hospitality to their own relations and friends.²

These are the factors why, in and around Steventon and in the houses of her relations, Jane Austen could mix with the people of different classes, and became in every way well fitted to write of the lives and feelings of the leisured class. But it is quite true that her relationship to the gentry and aristocracy is not deep

1. Park Honan, Jane Austen : Her Life, (London, 1987), p. 118

2. A Memoir of Jane Austen, (London, 1906), p. 22

owing to her birth and fortune. The past glories of her parents' family background did not qualify her for a place among the gentry. Elfrida Vipont notes that Mrs Austen's good family connections "enabled the Austens and later their children, to maintain a nodding acquaintance with the local aristocracy."¹ Since her father's income was poor, and it "was supplemented by teaching and farming,"² and since after her father's death she became dependent on her brothers, she was not warmly accepted even by the children of Edward (who were then the children of a gentry).

Anna, a favourite niece of Jane Austen, says that Elizabeth (Edward's wife) and her children were not really fond of Jane Austen. The children enjoyed her as a playfellow, and as a teller of stories.³ Anna's view cannot wholly be trusted, but she does not seem to be unreasonable in view of the fact that Fanny Knight, the eldest daughter of Edward, does not remember her aunt as a social equal :

They [Cassandra and Jane] were not rich & the people around with whom they chiefly mixed, were not at all high bred, or in short anything more than mediocre & they of course tho' superior in Mental Powers & cultivation were on the same level as far as refinement goes -- but... Aunt Jane was too clever not to put aside all possible signs of "commonness" (if such an expression is allowable) & teach herself to be more refined, at least in intercourse with people in general.... If it had not been for Papa's marriage...they would have been...very much below par as to good Society and its ways.⁴

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1. A Little Bit of Ivory, (London, 1977), p. 9
 2. F. B. Pinion, Op.cit. p. 6
 3. 'Ms Austen,' Reading, Dec. 1864, quoted in Park Honan, Op.cit. p. 118
 4. "Aunt Jane," Cornhill Magazine, 163 (1947-49), pp. 72-73, quoted in Marilyn Butler, 'History, Politics, and Religion,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 199

Fanny Knight (afterwards Lady Knatchbull) is a member of a great house, perhaps, similar to that of Mansfield Park. To her assessment, her aunt's social position is not worthy of comparison with that of the gentry. Therefore, although Jane Austen could mix with the people of a higher class, she 'chiefly mixed' with the families equal to her own social position. This is, after all, natural and this is what Brian Wilks tells us when he writes :

OF THE FAMILIES with whom the Austens were friendly, three were very closely connected indeed. References to them feature more regularly than others and it is clear that much of Jane's and Cassandra's time was spent with these families. The families were the Lloyds, the Lefroys, and the Bigg-Withers. All three were to become connected 'romantically' and, in some cases, through marriage into the Austen family.

In the social hierarchy of Hampshire these families were very much in the same position as the Austens.¹

Unlike the girls of the leisured class, the Austen girls were taught by their "mother to cook and supervise maids in the stillroom and dairy."² In 1798, Mrs Austen, who was often unwell, handed over some of her "duties to her elder daughter, in whose absence Jane proved a willing substitute."³ In the same year Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra : "My mother desires me to tell you that I am a very

1. Jane Austen, (Hamlyn, 1978), p. 67

2. Peggy Hickman, 'Food and Drink,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 160

3. Ibid, p. 160

good housekeeper, which I have no reluctance in doing, because I really think it my peculiar excellence."¹ This work-ideal of Jane Austen is the work-ideal of the professionals in her novels.

Jane Austen's novels comprise characters ranging from the aristocracy to the lower middle class. But her letters as well as memoirs and biographies on her, suggest clearly that she belongs to the professional middle class. Her social position is much the same as that of her characters like the Grants in Mansfield Park, the Morlands in Northanger Abbey, and the Eltons in Emma, who are respectable in their own way, but keep themselves at a distance from the gentry. The lesser gentry, such as the Bennets, who are a step higher in the social scale than the Austens themselves, can be regarded as belonging to Jane Austen's class for a number of reasons -- their estate is entailed, and they suffer from various problems; they are closely related to the professionals; and the nobility does not recognize the family as a respectable one. In a way what the Austens had experienced in real life could have been experienced by the fictional Bennets as well. The younger sons of the gentry also belong to her class, for they are destined to be professionals. In such consideration, most of her heroes (Henry Tilney, Edward Ferrars, Edmund Bertram, and Captain Wentworth), and heroines (Catherine Morland, Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, and Fanny Price) are members of her own class. The heroine in Persuasion, Anne Elliot, who is the daughter of an aristocrat, most suitably fits in the professional class inasmuch as "She gloried in being a sailor's wife" (ch. 24), and because of her generous attitude towards the Navy.

1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 28

II

Up to the later part of the eighteenth century the social status of the middle-class professionals, in England, was deplorable. They were looked down upon with contempt by the land-owning governing class. Since working for a living was held in low esteem, the gentry and the aristocracy turned into a 'leisured class' and "enjoyed a time of unprecedented pleasure and freedom."¹ As a consequence of this social prejudice, only those people were accounted gentlemen who maintained themselves without manual labour.² The professionals, excepting those who were the younger sons of the upper classes, were seen as unworthy of becoming gentlemen. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the changing social circumstances weakened the old order of society and the professionals were on the way to becoming the dominating class. They were rising in economic and social importance and "demanded that attention should be paid to their values."³

Jane Austen belonged to both social backgrounds. It is interesting to note that from the very beginning to the end of her career as

1. Brian Wilks, Jane Austen, (Hamlyn, 1978), p. 12

2. Ibid, p. 13

3. David Monaghan, Jane Austen : Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), p. 9

a writer she retains the same ardent spirit and interest in upholding the status and values of the middle-class professionals in her works. As a novelist of a changing society she makes her last novel, Persuasion, present a glowing account of the naval officers that elevates as well as dignifies the social status of the professionals in general and in keeping with the spirit of the change.

Lionel Trilling's observation that "the matter of a man's profession was of peculiar importance to Jane Austen"¹ is amply justified. In her novels, she presents a good number of major characters from various professions along with many other professional minor characters. Four heroes (Edward Ferrars, Henry Tilney, Edmund Bertram, and Captain Wentworth) and two heroines (Fanny Price and Catherine Morland) belong to this class. In the plot of her novels the profession of a character is significant, because it plays an important role in determining his or her social relationships with other characters. Jane Austen's keen interest in portraying the professional class strongly suggests that she was greatly influenced by her own class background as she, herself, came of a professional family. Her father and two of her brothers were clergymen as were her mother's father and grandfather. Her other two brothers were in the Navy. William Austen, her grandfather, was a surgeon, and her fore-fathers were in the trade. This family background, undoubtedly, induced her to stand by the professional middle class. Angus Wilson rightly remarks :

1. 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park,' Pelican Guide to English Literature vol. 5, ed. Boris Ford, (Penguin, 1975), p. 119

She was on the whole, like Richardson, anti aristocratic (a good part of her mistrust of worldliness comes from this). She stood by the professional classes from which she came -- by the Navy, the Church and the respectable counting houses. The leavening is peculiarly marked in Pride and Prejudice and in Persuasion.¹

At the end of Pride and Prejudice, the tradesmen, the Gardiners are "on the most intimate terms" with the aristocrat, Mr Darcy; while in Persuasion, the naval officers all the while appear as a dominating force, and make the aristocracy consider them as respectable social beings. Jane Austen is pleased to see the increasing importance of the people of her own class in society.

Angus Wilson speaks of several professions by which Jane Austen stands, but does not, quite reasonably, mention the Army. Although army officers are very common characters in her novels, she does not usually present them admiringly. The fact is that in eighteenth-century England, the law of primogeniture had established that only the eldest son would inherit family property, therefore, the younger sons were obliged to enter a profession to maintain themselves. They preferred two professions -- the Army and the Church. Of the two the Army was traditionally considered more gentlemanly than any other profession.² It was reserved for the aristocracy, and consequently almost all the military officers came from the aristocratic circle. The officers regarded the profession as a way of enjoying good life and of making entry into the best society. W. A. Craik is appropriate to observe :

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1. 'The Neighbourhood of Tombuctoo : Conflicts in Jane Austen's Novels,' Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1968), p. 189
 2. Julia Prewitt Brown, A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth Century English Novel, (New York, 1986), p. 62

Being the most fashionable profession, the army draws from the aristocracy as well as the gentry, and is thus an appropriately flashy calling for that self-seeking rogue Wickham. It was easy for army officers to have very little to do with their men, leaving their care and control to the sergeants, and leaving themselves free to idle, trifle, flirt, and waste their time and money, as do, apparently, the militia stationed at Meryton.¹

The officers were professionally inefficient and often corrupt. Since the Army continued to be an 'aristocratic institution,' it became increasingly unpopular with the rising democracy both of the middle and the working classes.² This social background is likely to have inspired Jane Austen to portray the Army in an unfavourable way. The soldiers in service, in her novels, usually suffer from moral turpitude. C. Linklater Thomas says : "... readers of Miss Austen's novels can hardly fail to notice that she nearly always speaks of soldiers with dislike, and the two of her dissipated youngmen, Wickham and Captain Tilney are officers in the army."³ Jane Austen's dislike towards the Army was enhanced as her brother, Henry, disappointing his family 'joined the Oxford Militia' as a lieutenant instead of taking ordination.⁴

There are, however, a few characters from the Army whom the

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1. Jane Austen in her Time, (Nelson, 1969), pp. 75-76
 2. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, (Penguin, 1977), pp. 513-15
 3. Jane Austen : A Survey, (London, 1929), p. 14
 4. Ibid., p. 14

novelist presents with sympathetic attention. But they are either retired from their service or have accepted the profession as their real means of livelihood. Colonel Brandon in Sense and Sensibility and Mr (Captain) Weston in Emma are amiable retired officers who are sensible, generous and sympathetic in discharging their social responsibilities. Colonel Campbell (in Emma) takes his profession seriously and glorifies it by his service. These army officers, in fact, belong to Jane Austen's own class. Colonel Brandon is a lesser gentry whose income is, like Mr Bennet's, £2000; Mr Weston comes of an ordinary family background, and is now a tradesman; Colonel Campbell is dependent on his service, and is unable to maintain Jane Fairfax any more. However, despite the presence of such army officers in her novels, Jane Austen cannot stand by the Army as she stands by other professions, since the soldiers, in general, are not worthy of appreciation.

Although the governing class preferred the Church as a profession, they "held the clergy in lower esteem than the military."¹ In Sense and Sensibility, Edward Ferrars wants to be a clergyman, which choice is not considered to be fashionable enough for his family. The members of his family prefer the Army for him. On its even, the Church was not an unattractive profession for the middle class. The "ambitious sons of the middle class used the Church as a springboard into the gentry, as Charles Hayter does in Austen's Persuasion."² But they were held

1. Julia Prewitt Brown, Op.cit, p. 41

2. Ibid, p. 41

in contempt by the snobbish aristocrats. Since Charles Hayter is a clergyman with no gentle blood, his cousin's wife, Mary, remarks scornfully to Captain Wentworth : "It is very unpleasant having such connection ! But, I assure you, I have never been in the house above twice in my life" (ch. 10). Jane Austen chooses her clergymen both from the upper and middle classes, and values their background in assessing their behaviour and sense of responsibilities.

Being rooted in a clerical family, the novelist was well aware of the profession of a clergyman. After the publication of Pride and Prejudice, she thought of writing a novel on 'ordination,' and told Cassandra Austen : "Now I will try to write of something else, & it shall be a complete change of subject -- ordination -- I am glad to find your enquiries have ended so well."¹ Mansfield Park is indeed written on this subject. In this novel, Edmund Bertram is committed to a profession. He along with the heroine, Fanny Price, argues with the Crawfords about the merits of the profession of a clergyman. Jane Austen always assumes that the clerical office is important, and admires those who are sincere to their calling. Macaulay speaks highly of her clergymen :

There are four clergymen, none of whom we should be surprised to find in any parsonage in the kingdom, Mr Edward Ferrars, Mr Henry Tilney, Mr Edmund Bertram, and Mr Elton. They are all specimens of the upper part of the middle class. They have all been liberally educated. They all lie under the restraints of the same sacred profession ... "²

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1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 298
 2. Macaulay, 'Edinburgh Review,' (January, 1843), Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage, ed., B. C. Southam, (London, 1969), p. 122

Macaulay is, of course, ignoring Mr Collins as he is obviously ill qualified for the Church. Mr Collins is not a rational man at all. He is pompous, narrow-minded and silly. His view of his duties as a clergyman is grotesquely limited. He is not accomplished in social manners and custom, and Jane Austen enjoys making fun of him. But at the same time, the novelist speaks of his social as well as family background as the cause of his failure to be a polished clergyman. Since he was brought up by an illiterate and miserly father, he was unable to learn polished manners and behaviour. Although Jane Austen's clergymen come of different classes and her presentation and treatment of them vary, she suggests that they are socially important irrespective of their class background. Marilyn Butler aptly comments :

Her clerics divide into attractive ones...., and unattractive ones... But when all Austen's clergymen are considered together, they suggest that she took as axiomatic the interdependence of great house and rectory and wanted the social status of the Church side of the alliance kept up.¹

Traditionally, the clergymen studied at Oxford or Cambridge, or may have attended the seminaries that grew up in the nineteenth century for training ministers. Despite their education and training before taking ordination, most of the clergymen seem to be inadequately equipped so far as ideas about their duties are concerned.

1. 'History, Politics, and Religion,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 203

Dictionary of British Women Writers is quite right in noting that "the majority of Jane Austen's clergy are career persons, the value of whose livings is easier to ascertain than the nature of their ministry".¹ It is known that in the eighteenth century, for a time, the English clergy became the least clerical of priesthood. Moreover,

There was perfect liberty for the individual parson to act according to his own light, however eccentric.... But little pressure was exerted either by episcopal authority or by public opinion to compel the clergy to exert themselves more than they wished.²

These are, perhaps, the reasons why Jane Austen's clergymen enjoy freedom to do as they wish. Edmund Bertram takes his ordination seriously and defends his profession against the cynicism of the Crawfords, but he seems hardly to be conscious of his duty as that of saving souls of his parishioners. Mr Collins equates his responsibilities of christening, marrying, and burying his parishioners with his obligation to make a fourth at the card table of his patron. He is prone to think more of his self-interest rather than of the duties of a clergy entrusted with him. Attractive clergymen like Henry Tilney and Mr Elton do not seem to be so earnest in performing their professional responsibilities either.

1. Janet Todd ed., (London, 1989), p. 22

2. G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, (Penguin, 1977), pp. 373-74

But Jane Austen's presentation of a clergyman in relation to the other members of the same family is clearly indicative of her favourable inclination towards the former. She praises Edward Ferrars, Henry Tilney, and Edmund Bertram, who take ordination; but criticizes and even sometimes despises their parents, brothers, and sisters. Mrs Ferrars is a great snob; Sir Bertram is an incompetent father; Tom Bertram is addicted to gambling and drinking; General Tilney is selfish and very severe in manners; Captain Tilney is a dissipated young man. But the clergymen of these families radiate charms and grace. By allowing them to do so, Jane Austen clearly takes side with the clergymen.

History records that the Navy played the most significant role in the Napoleonic Wars for the victory of England. And it is a matter of social record that naval officers of that time came of the poor middle class. The aristocracy disliked the profession since the sailors enjoyed no social status, and were ill-fed and ill-paid. Jane Austen is a true painter of the Navy of her time. Trevelyan refers to her novels in telling about the naval officers :

The naval officers were now the sons of gentlemen of modest means (Nelson was a poor parson's son), sent to sea as boys, and combining what was best in the 'tarpaulin's' experience and training with the manner and thought of an educated man. Fanny's brother, William, in Mansfield Park, and Captain Wentworth in Persuasion stand for all that was most attractive in the type.¹

1. G. M. Trevelyan, Op.cit., p. 512

Like Nelson, the youngmen of ability with neither blood nor wealth had a better chance of rising in the Navy. Jane Austen glorifies this essentially middle-class profession in two of her novels, Mansfield Park and Persuasion. The professional spirit that she observed in her two naval brothers must have influenced her in the portrayal of the Navy with interest. Goldwin Smith says :

The two youngest brothers, Francis and Charles, were sailors, and served in the Great War. Both rose to the rank of Admiral; both seem to have deserved it; and both left a record of kindly and gentle character as well as of high professional spirit. The details of their profession, their prize-money, and their promotion as well as the joy with which they were welcomed home, have left plain traces on their sister's page.¹

But Jane Austen's steady admiration for the Navy must not be set down merely to her affection for her sailor brothers. She admires the sailors for their worth and heroism. At Southampton (1807-09), "She saw naval activity at close quarters; up to this time, it was sailors rather than soldiers who had done almost all the fighting in the British side and won the victories."² In the war, the Navy increased its dignity and became popular. Anne Elliot in Persuasion displays her partiality for the naval officers : "You are always labouring and toiling, exposed to every risk and hardship.

1. Life of Jane Austen, (London, n.d.), pp. 13-14

2. Marilyn Butler, 'History, Politics, and Religion,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 200

Your home, country, friends, all quitted. Neither time, nor health, nor life, to be called your own" (ch. 23) But although the sailors stand for energy, sacrifice, and patriotism, Sir Walter Elliot, a snob that he is, is unprepared to recognize the worth of the profession: "The profession has its utility, but I should be sorry to see any friend of mine belonging to it" (ch. 3). Sir Walter is not ready to see it as a means of bringing "persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of" (ch. 3). However, the snobbery of the aristocracy could not deter Jane Austen in portraying the professional pride of the Navy.

Lionel Trilling is right in assessing that her "feelings about men in relation to their profession reach their highest intensity in Persuasion."¹ In this novel, the upper class heroine, Anne Elliot, marries Captain Wentworth, a naval officer belonging to the novelist's own class. Captain Wentworth's successful career endows him with qualities that in Jane Austen's eyes make him worthy to be a son-in-law of a decaying aristocrat. In taking this, Jane Austen pays a tribute to the professional middle class.

Fellow-feeling is a striking feature of the naval officers in Persuasion. They value their friends' opinions and live in friendship. They feel for each other in their time of distress and misfortune.

1. 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park,' The Pelican Guide to English Literature vol. 5, ed. Boris Ford, (Penguin, 1975), p. 119

Captain Benwick, who is mourning the loss of his fiancée, stays with the Harvilles, enjoying their hospitality. The warm relationships amongst the members of the Navy impressed Louisa Musgrove so much that she

burst forth into raptures of admiration and delight on the character of the navy; their friendliness, their brotherliness, their openness, their uprightness; protesting that she was convinced of sailors having more worth and warmth than any other set of men in England; that they only knew how to live, and they only deserved to be respected and loved. (ch. 11)

Nowhere in Jane Austen we find such a glowing tribute paid to a different profession. Although it is Louisa who is speaking in her effusion about the Navy, she does it so with full approval of the novelist.

William Price in Mansfield Park is an admirable sailor who by virtue of his perseverance succeeds in building up his career in the Navy. He earns the esteem of Sir Thomas Bertram by his respectful manners and pleasant countenance. Jane Austen speaks highly of the naval officers, but she expresses her indignation against Admiral Crawford. As for the Admiral, he is an exception. She presents him peripherally in the novel but introduces him as "a vicious conduct, who chose, instead of retaining his niece (on his wife's death), to bring his mistress under his own roof" (ch. 4). Admiral Crawford lives in London, and Jane Austen makes use of him almost as a foe to the 'citadel'¹ that the other naval officers,

1. Angus Wilson uses this term to express the theme of country manners versus town debauchery in 'Evil in the English Novel,' Kenyon Review, vol. 29, (March, 1967), p. 169

residing outside London and belonging to Jane Austen's own class, represent.

Trade of any sort was clearly not a natural or proper calling for a gentleman in Jane Austen's England. The tradesmen were looked down upon by the aristocracy. Indeed, in Pride and Prejudice it is part of the social shame of the Bennets, in Lady Catherine's eyes, that they have an uncle in trade. But Jane Austen demonstrates in the character of Mr Gardiner that the tradesmen are not necessarily unworthy of becoming gentlemen. Mr Gardiner is "a sensible, gentlemanlike man" who is superior to his sister by nature as by education. "The Netherfield ladies would have had difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouse, could have been so well-bred and agreeable" (ch. 25). Mr Gardiner's personality, intelligence and behaviour earned for him his friendship with the aristocrat, Mr Darcy, who, before meeting him, did not approve of Mr Bingley's marriage with Jane Bennet in consideration of her family connections with a tradesman and an attorney. But when Mr Darcy met this tradesman at Pemberley he not only liked him but also considered him a gentleman; and their intimacy grew day by day.

Mr Gardiner is so sensible and conscious of the family reputation of his connections that he eclipses Mr Bennet's dignity as a gentleman. Although in social hierarchy Mr Bennet is a gentleman and Mr Gardiner is not, Jane Austen imparts the idea in her presentation of both characters that the former is as less a man as a gentleman compared with the latter. Lionel Trilling is right in saying :

His [Mr Bennet's] estate being entailed, he has made no effort to secure his family against his death, and by reason of his otiosity he is impotent to protect his family's good name from the consequences of Lydia's sexual escapade. He is represented as being not only less a man but also as less a gentleman than his brother-in-law Gardiner, who is in trade in London.¹

Mr Bennet is not as responsible as Mr Gardiner is. When the Bennet family is in crisis Mr Gardiner becomes more active and serious than Mr Bennet to rescue them from their trouble. The efforts of the Gardiners as well as their practical suggestions and sympathetic attention to the Bennets enhance them socially. And by displaying their virtues and noble qualities Jane Austen places them as "an example of natural aristocracy."²

In Emma, Mr Weston, a former Captain in the Army, and the Coles are in trade; and they earn admiration from all. But since Jane Austen is too much of a realist to come to an easy conclusion about a class of people, she prefers characters who are rather exceptional. Although she is sympathetic towards the people in trade, she is critical of Sir Lucas and Mrs Elton. They do not have social accomplishments to match their new status. Sir Lucas displays his worst before the aristocrats; while Mrs Elton, who has not profited from her upbringing,

1. 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park.' Op.cit. p. 119

2. A Walton Litz, Jane Austen : A Study of her Artistic Development, (London, 1965), p. 105

is indecorous in her behaviour with the gentry. But it is remarkable to note that both are kind-hearted people, and are always responsible to the cause of others.

Although trade of any kind was not a mark of gentility in England, it was not considered disgraceful to have enterprises in the colonies. Jane Austen was well aware that estates and mercantile ventures in the British colonies were owned and maintained by a small group of aristocrats and gentry. The Bertrams in Mansfield Park are a subgroup within the minority who are engaged in colonial business. Edward W. Said Makes an excellent point when he says :

The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class; as a social type Sir Thomas would have been familiar to eighteenth - and early - nineteenth-century readers who knew the powerful influence of the class through politics, plays... and many other public activities.¹

The novelist does not mention either of slave trade or of sugar plantation, but these are allusive in her work. Tom Bertram who went to Antigua with his father says to the vicar that it was "A strange business this in America, Dr. Grant" (ch. 12) ! We are not told what the strange business was.

Almost at the beginning of the story we learn that "Sir Thomas found it expedient to go to Antigua himself, for the better arrangement of his affairs" and

1. "Jane Austen and Empire," Culture and Imperialism, (New York, 1993), p. 94

The necessity of the measure in a pecuniary light, and the hope of its utility to his son, reconciled Sir Thomas to the effort of quitting the rest of his family, and of leaving his daughters to the direction of others at their present most interesting time of life. (ch. 3)

What sustains the life at Mansfield Park materially is the Bertram estate in Antigua, and therefore Sir Thomas goes there to affirm his control over his colonial domain. Wealth derived from this island is needed for the Park's comfort and easy life. Edward W. Said is right in observing that :

Mansfield Park is... a novel based in an England relying for the maintenance of its style on a Caribbean island. When Sir Thomas goes to and come from Antigua, where he has property, that is not at all the same thing as coming to and going from Mansfield Park, where his presence, arrivals, and departures have very considerable consequences.¹

In all likelihood, Sir Thomas's sugar plantation in the Caribbean is maintained by slave labour. But Jane Austen is not critical of colonial exploitation of the British for their domestic improvement, or of the acquisition of overseas dominions as a local fortune. On the contrary, she regards colonial wealth as an essential element for preserving prosperity, order, comfort, and even morality of Mansfield Park. She, in fact, "affirms and repeats the geographical process of expansion involving trade, production, and consumption that predates, underlies, and guarantees the morality."²

1. Ibid. p. 96

2. Ibid. pp. 92-93

Tradesmen are not respected in Jane Austen's society, but the gentry (like the Bertrams) with colonial trade connections is not censured at all. At home and abroad Sir Bertram has land, and because of this reason his material profit earned through colonial trade does not belittle him, rather the material wealth gained therefrom enhances him socially.

True, minor professionals like the governesses, attorneys, apothecaries, and school mistress belong to low social status; but their sincerity and devotion to duties make them worthy of admiration in Jane Austen. The presentation of these professionals shows that the novelist is appreciative of their professional work, and is also well disposed towards them. Miss Taylor had been sixteen years in the family of Mr Woodhouse 'less as a governess than a friend' but any reflection upon the gentility of this governess is indignantly repudiated by Emma. Emma appreciates the good qualities of her governess but does not honour her profession. After the marriage of Miss Taylor, Emma contemplates about her :

She had been a friend and companion such as few possessed; intelligent, well-informed, useful, gentle, knowing all the ways of the family, interested in all its concerns, and peculiarly interested in herself, in every pleasure, every scheme of hers; one to whom she could speak every thought as it arose, and who had such an affection for her as could never find fault. (ch. 1)

Although Emma does not recognize her governess's profession, she, in an indirect way, lends dignity to her profession by praising the virtues of her governess. In her presentation of many other minor

professionals, Jane Austen introduces them in a favourable way. For instances, she speaks of Mr Perry, the apothecary, in Emma as "an intelligent gentlemanlike man whose frequent visits were one of the comforts of Mr Woodhouse's life" (ch. 2); and that of Mrs Goddard, a school mistress, in the same novel, as "a plain, motherly kind of woman, who had worked hard in her youth" (ch. 3).

In marriage, which is a vital necessity for the security as well as peace and happiness for the life of human beings, the professionals are usually in an advantageous position. The Gardiners, the Crofts, and the Harvilles are the happiest couples in Jane Austen. On the contrary, the gentry and the aristocracy are either deprived of their spouse or of family peace consequent upon their lack of mutual understanding. Lady Catherine, Mrs Ferrars and Mrs Rushworth are widows; while General Tilney and Sir Walter Elliot are widowers. Sir Bertram is unhappy as his lady is indifferent to him. It is to be noted that the heroines coming from a professional background are married to the most sensible heroes who are the sons of the leisured class. Catherine Morland, the daughter of a clergyman, is married to the son of a rich General; Fanny Price, the daughter of a retired sailor, gets the son of a Baronet as her husband. Similarly, the sailor hero Captain Wentworth marries Anne Elliot who is superior to him in class position. Elizabeth Bennet, the daughter of a lesser gentry is married to an aristocrat. All these new couples are expected to retain peace and happiness in their family life.

In her presentation of the people of her own class Jane Austen upholds the work-ideal which was taking shape in opposition to the

ideal of aristocratic leisure. Most of her professional characters by virtue of their sincerity and devotion to their profession, as well as by their personal charms and manners are able to establish their rights in society. In her works, she records the rise of the middle class through the professionals. The tradesman Mr Gardiner, the naval officer Captain Wentworth, and the clergyman Mr Morland compel the aristocrats to take them seriously. However, it is important to remember that as Jane Austen's approach is realistic her characters cannot be generalized. They are typical, but not without individuality of their own. Since she is aware of human nature, she would not allow all to be alike. Therefore, all the professionals are not equally admirable in her novels, rather there are a few unattractive characters in each profession. Although Jane Austen judges her characters by their individual merits, she, in general, cherishes her tenderness for the people of her own class, speaks in favour of them, and stands by them.

In her novels, Jane Austen concentrates her attention on the wealth, home, education, upbringing, etc. of the people of her class; and succeeds in depicting their ideology, aspiration, limitation and tension of life. She sees them in society in relation to their superior class, and depicts their various insecurities along with their social fear. She presents the culture of her class as D. H. Lawrence does of the working class. Lawrence did not like Jane Austen; and Jane Austen would surely have dismissed Lawrence as unreadable had she lived to come across his writings; yet they are alike at least in this that both owe a part of their greatness to the fact of their writing with inside experience.

CHAPTER TWO : FEAR OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

I

The theme of fear is not new in the English fiction. From Daniel Defoe to the modern novelists, the treatment of this psychological aspect of human beings has been diverse and manifold. But Jane Austen's presentation as well as treatment of fear is a striking feature, because she, for the first time in the English novel, shows the fears of her characters in a social context, and depicts elaborately how it influences them in the formation of their personality and outlook.

Jane Austen's predecessors -- Defoe, Richardson, and the Gothic novelists -- display the fears of their characters isolating them from their society. In Robinson Crusoe, Crusoe passes about twenty-eight years almost alone in an island, and tells us in detail of his fear and horror of life there. Reaching the uninhabited island, Crusoe wonders what to do, or how to live. He is in terrible agonies for fear of the wild beasts, and for the uncertainties of his sustenance there. The new circumstances terrify him so much that he contemplates in despair, and behaves as if he were mad :

I began to look round me to see what kind of Place I was in, and what was next to be done, and I soon found my Comforts abate, and that in a word I had a dreadful Deliverance : For I was wet, had no Clothes to shift me, nor any thing either to eat or drink to comfort me, neither did I see any Prospect before me, but that of perishing with Hunger, or being devour'd by wild Beasts;... In a Word, I had nothing about me but a Knife, a Tobacco-pipe, and a little Tobacco in a Box, this was all my Provision, and this threw me into terrible Agonies of Mind, that for a while I run

about like a Mad-man.¹

Crusoe's fear of death or of uncertainties of life dominates in the book whenever he is in storms, wrecks, or sees the 'mystic single foot print,' or thinks of his fate if he falls into the hands of the cannibals who come to the island to devour their own kind. In fact, Crusoe's fear is quite circumstantial.

Defoe's Moll Flanders and Roxana are stories of women who are isolated from their society in another dimension, and lead immoral life because of necessity and poverty. They fear to mix in society, and try to hide their identity. The primary cause of fear in Defoe's novels is the problem of necessity. For Defoe and his contemporaries

'Necessity' indicated a state of desperation, usually associated with starvation and destitution, in which the victim is forced to choose between certain death or a life prolonged only by violating the laws of society, religion, or personal honour. In debating the problems of necessity most writers chose sides according to their attitude towards self-preservation.²

Defoe places his characters in such a situation that it is for their sheer self-preservation that they are forced to choose the second course of life to solve their problems. In Roxana, when Roxana is deserted by her improvident first husband, she finds herself in a point of extreme necessity. She is faced with the problem of choosing

1. Robinson Crusoe, (Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 47

2. Maximillian E. Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man. (Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 66

between death with honour and a life of disgrace. She debates herself upon the problem and at last gives in. Her fear of necessity and poverty makes her to lead an immoral life. Roxana frankly confesses the reason why she yielded to the advancement of her landlord :

I had yielded to him, not as deluded to believe it lawful, but as overcome by his kindness, and terrified at the fear of my own misery if he should leave me. So with my eyes open, and with my conscience, as I may say, awoke, I sinned, knowing it is to be a sin, but having no power to resist.¹

Clearly, Roxana is citing here as elsewhere poverty as a palliation for her loss of virtue. As a woman, since she has no opportunity of earning her livelihood, she takes the profession in which she can 'operate a trade.' Ian A. Bell points out her helpless condition in a patriarchal social system, and aptly remarks that she

falls into her first crimes more through need than through inclination. All Roxana has been trained for is polite matrimony, and without that she has no recourse other than prostituting her graces and social skills.²

Initially Roxana was firmly against the idea of prostitution, but poverty brings her into it, and fear of poverty keeps her in it. She fears to disoblige her landlord for her bare necessities of life. Says she :

1. Roxana vol. 1, ed. George A. Aitken, (London, 1900), p. 47. All references are to this edition.

2. Defoe's Fiction, (London, 1985), p. 167

if I had ventured to disoblige this gentleman, I
 had no friend in the world to have recourse to;
 I had no prospect -- no, not of a bit of bread;
 I had nothing before me but to fall back into the
 same misery that I had been in before. (p. 41)

Her fear of future poverty urges her to accept the landlord's love. At the same time, she is even grateful to him for putting her into a better way of living. Maximillian E. Novak is right in thinking that "On the whole, she prefers to plead her case on the basis of necessity, but the force of gratitude is an added palliative."¹

When Roxana becomes rich through whoredom, her fear of want turns into false pride and vanity, which leads her to the Prince's bed in France. She speaks in favour of female individualism, and does not accept the marriage proposal of the Dutch merchant lest she should lose her possessions. Since a woman's property, in her age, became the property of her husband, Roxana's "greatest fear, therefore, is to be 'reduced' to the status of a mere woman by marriage."² She would not let that happen. Her fear of poverty teaches her to be worldly wise. And hence she rejects the proposal of marriage just to enjoy her newly born sense of individualism. This cherished independence of Roxana is not wholly attributable to the social and economic pressures on women in the prevailing social system.

1. Op.cit., p. 117

2. Clive T. Probyn, English Fiction of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1789, (London, 1987), p. 42

In the later half of the novel, Roxana's fear becomes the real interest of the story. Benjamin Boyce puts it aptly :

The interest provided by Defoe in the first half of Roxana includes much besides the erotic, but the real power of the book comes later, as Lamb noticed, and it derives from the emotion of fear.¹

Roxana, now, fears society, religion, Providence, and even her children. She does not move in society with her own identity. Wishing to retire with her wealth and avoid the strain of a fast society, she "hides herself in the Minories and, masking as a Quaker, undertakes a new life of concealment and precarious happiness."² But her concealment cannot give her happiness, as she is being pursued by her daughter. Roxana evaluates her conduct in the 'light' of Christian ideals, and feels 'a secret hell within' (p. 85); and her fear of religion or Providence dominates over the fear of law of nature. Novak is right in considering that

Disturbed by her sinning against her 'Light,' by her complete realization of the nature of her crimes, Roxana insists on viewing her past actions in the light of Christian ideals rather than the laws of nature.³

Defoe presents Roxana's various phases of life to show that she cannot get fulfilment at any stage. Her experiences teach her

1. 'The Question of Emotion in Defoe,' Twentieth Century Views on Daniel Defoe, ed. Max Byrd, (New Jersey, 1976), p. 48

2. Ibid. p. 49

3. Maximillian E. Novak, Op.cit., p. 86

that there is a fear of necessity in one hand, and a potential threat of the spiritual as well as social concerns on the other. Roxana is a victim of all these fears in her life. The solutions of her problems recommended by Defoe are of one, whose "bias was essentially practical."¹ Culturally, Defoe stands quite apart from Jane Austen. Although he is a writer of the Neo-classical Age, he does not ignore the commercial culture in his works. His world is mercenary, and the standard of morality of his characters is very low and ambiguous. Defoe's characters, like Roxana, repent of their sins very frequently but with little consequence. This is, perhaps, the reason why S. Diana Neill remarks : "His religious instincts were sound, but he took good care to salt his moralizings with plenty of entertaining matter, and he never allowed the moral to spoil the story."² Defoe is hardly seen to be critical of the immoral activities of his women like Roxana and Moll Flanders. He allows them, without considering morality, to solve their problems of self preservation. He does not even criticize Roxana's approval of murdering her daughter.

Defoe's characters are highly concerned with their personal problems. In his works "only individual solutions are possible to major social problems."³ The solutions are very often against human values. Moll Flanders and Roxana solve their problems but they fear to move in society, because they understand it well that their modes

1. Walter Allen, The English Novel, (Penguin, 1971), p. 38

2. S. Diana Neill, A Short History of the English Novel, (New York, 1964), p. 54

3. David Skilton, Defoe to the Victorians, (Penguin, 1985), p. 16

of solving their problems have made them low and abominable. However, it is true that for them society creates environment in the making of criminals as it fails initially to find them a place. At long last, when Defoe's corrupt women judge their immoral activities in the light of Christian ideals, they learn to fear religion and Providence. In fact, Defoe individualizes fear by introducing his characters in very special circumstances -- either in an uninhabited island or in a dark narrow world -- where they are allowed to do whatever they like for their self preservation, without considering any standard of morality.

Two decades after Defoe, Richardson's novels introduced for the first time in English prose fiction the sexual dilemmas of young girls with strong religious inclinations. Richardson, in fact, delineates fear of sexuality as well as moral conduct, social position and outlook, and religious beliefs of his heroines who struggle against sexual seduction, with the same energy that Defoe's use to escape poverty. Because of their fear of poverty Defoe's heroines -- Roxana and Moll Flanders -- lead licentious life. They lose their moral strength, and are desexualized in the process of conquering the rich and amassing wealth. Richardson's heroines, on the other hand, are profoundly moral; they resist all improper advances of noble suitors and preserve their chastity even when they are living in odd situations. They either force their patriarchal society to recognize their claims or choose death rather than surrender to their oppressors. They are always apprehensive that at any time their chastity may be vanquished. In tracing the inmost thoughts and feelings, behaviour and attitude, and fear of sexuality of his heroines, Richardson shows a gift of psychological insight. David Skilton is right in remarking that

the fear of sexuality Richardson's novels display surely reflects psychologically on him and his contemporary admirers, and the mystique he attached to virginity was a reflection of the mechanism by which male society repressed its women."¹

1. Defoe to the Victorians, (Penguin, 1985), p. 22

Richardson's depiction of fear of his heroines is different from that of Defoe. This is because Richardson had a different attitude towards the virtue of women. His heroines do not long for wealth, rather they attach the utmost importance to the purity of their hearts, and fight against the mighty. One got the feeling that "masters may well have been planning to seduce their servants in half the houses in England."¹ Richardson, needless to say, did not approve of such goings-on. Although he accepted the traditional class-structure of his day, he protested against the immoral activities of the aristocracy indirectly by imparting the teaching of religion and morality. In Pamela, he lets us see without his becoming agitated, how Mr B. treats Pamela as part of his goods and chattels; and how Pamela is rewarded by Providence for her strong sense of piety and morality. Repression of male society on its women is the cause of fear of Richardson's heroines. But it is interesting to note that the fear of his heroines turn into a positive force in their struggle against the persistent attacks of the suitors on their chastity. Although they are locked in various odd places, and are under social and sexual pressure, they do not yield to the advancement of the aristocratic rakes. Their fear teaches them to live in precaution, and be careful of the tricks of men. Pamela lives in fear but she thwarts the stratagems of Mr B. by her prudence. Clarissa, on the other hand, by embracing her death "has shown that moral and religious battles can be fought in the person, body and

1. William M. Sale Jr., Pamela, (New York, 1958), ix. All references are to this edition.

spirit, of a woman, and has thus pointed the way ironically enough to a fundamental secularization of literary concerns."¹ Richardson describes with exactness the feelings and fears of his heroines as well as their protests against patriarchal society. And by making his central characters in his first two novels (Pamela and Clarissa) women, and placing them in opposition to the libertinage of men, he did much to elevate the position of women, novelistically speaking.

Besides fear of sexuality, Richardson depicts other fears of class society as well. The eighteenth century was an age of well-defined social distinctions, and its language accorded with social structure. In Richardson, the poor are too inarticulate to set a dominant tone in presence of the country squires. Pamela's father suspected that Mr B. had sent Pamela to London, but he could not tell it frankly to her master. When he hinted at the point the squire reacted; and the conversation between them clearly shows that people of lower classes were apprehensive of the squires :

O how shall I know this ? replied he, -- what ! said the squire, pretending anger, am I to be doubted ?-- Do you believe I can have any view upon your daughter ? And if I had, do you think I would take such methods as these to effect it ? Why, surely, man, thou forgettest whom thou talkest to ! O, sir, said he, I beg your pardon ! but consider my dear child is in the case; let me know but what bishop, and where; I will travel to London on foot, to see my daughter, and then shall be satisfied. (p. 95)

1. Rita Goldberg, Sex and Enlightenment, (Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 126

In Pride and Prejudice, the sentiments of Lady Catherine de Bourgh are not wide apart from those of Mr B. and Lady Davers (Mr B's sister). Like Mr B, Lady Catherine asks Elizabeth Bennet, "Miss Bennet, do you know who I am ?" (ch. 56) and then tells her not to 'quit the sphere' she lives in. In Pamela, Lady Davers Warns her brother not to marry beneath him. She scolds Pamela :

Thou'r't almost got into a fool's paradise, I doubt ! And wilt find thyself terribly mistaken in a little while, if thou thinkest my brother will disgrace his family to humour thy baby-face ! (p. 301)

The interest in social distinctions, in manners and morals, is common to both Richardson and Jane Austen. Yet the difference remains in this that Jane Austen's discriminations are much more delicate, which difference makes the pictures of Richardson look like studies in the burlesque. The difference is not ignorable at all.

In Pamela, employees and servants who are dependent on Mr B for their livelihood are obliged to show their allegiance to him. Since they suffer from a sense of economic insecurity, they cannot go against the will of their master, and consequently fail to stand by Pamela's side in time of her need. Mr William, the clergyman, is a good person. Pamela wrote to him seeking his help, but his response is unsatisfactory so far as Pamela is concerned. For he wrote :

I am infinitely concerned for your distress. I most heartily wish it may be in my power to

serve and save so much innocence, beauty, and merit. My whole dependence is upon Mr B --, and I have a near view of being provided for by his favour to me. But yet I would sonner forfeit all my hopes in him (trusting in God for the rest) than not assist you, if possible.(p. 131)

There are others who, like Mr William, want to help Pamela but cannot do because of the same fear as Mr William's.

Richardson's intention is to present a comprehensive didacticism in his novels. He inculcates on people the idea that Providence always rewards those who have honesty and integrity in them. Moral instructions are present in all of his three novels. It is not unjustified to view his novels, in the way Rita Goldberg does, "as versions of the conduct books ... written with the purpose of illustrating virtuous behaviour in the various stations of social life."¹ In 1748, when Clarissa was published, Richardson in his letter to Lady Bradshaigh wrote about this novel that "Religion ... never was at so low an ebb as at present. And if my work must be supposed of the moral kind, I was willing to try if a religious novel would do good."² This clearly reveals the moralistic intention behind the writing his novels.

Concerned as he was with sex and class in his novels, Richardson's mode of presentation of fear of sexuality introduced a new dimension

1. Op. cit., p. 28

2. Ibid, pp. 27-28

in the English novel. Although he deals with sexuality as a personal problem, his world does not seem to be a real world. Unlike Jane Austen's, Richardson's heroines live in special circumstances which Hazlitt, in a brilliant phrase, termed as a world of 'artificial reality.'¹ However, beyond this, in his depiction of social and economic insecurities of the poor people, his world is as realistic as that of Jane Austen, notwithstanding the fact that Austen's is much more refined, compared with Richardson's.

1. Walter Allen, The English Novel, (Penguin, 1971), p. 48

The aim of the Gothic novelists being the evocation of horror and terror, they are deeply concerned with the emotion of fear. Their stories are usually set far away in time, location, and belief. Since Gothic novels are exotic, fantastic, and alien from common experience, the readers get themselves frightened with tales of wonders.

Gothic fiction made its appearance with the work of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1765. During the period of Jane Austen the Gothic tale had its greatest vogue. This genre of literature countered eighteenth century rationalism with scenes of mystery, horror and wonder. Men and women were tired of being wholly reasonable, and the Gothic novelists came to their help catering to the newly developed taste for the 'Gothic.' They conjured up for the readers a medieval world of savage passions enacted in melodramatic settings of ruined castles, ancient monasteries, and wild landscapes. Gothic novels thus made the way to the Romantic phase of literary history, and stood in opposition to the world of Augustan values by the revelation of a private world of fancy and imagination.

Fear and horror in the Gothic novels depend much on their relationship between the characters and their immediate environment. The novelists used atmosphere as a principal element in evoking grosser sensations of terror and brutality keeping the readers in suspense and wonder. Since their motive was to stimulate stronger emotional aspects of human mind, they created a far off and fancyful medieval dark world where supernatural elements played upon the characters. The ghostly elements created psycho-physical disturbances

in the characters, striking them with horror. Walter Allen's comments about the Gothic novels are apt and to the point :

These novels are characterized by a peculiarly intense relationship between the characters and their environments. Character and environment are impregnated each with the other. To some extent environment is, as it were, humanized; and the character himself is as he is because of the environment and cannot be detached from it; it is a necessary element for his existence, a special kind of air.¹

Clearly, the Gothic novelists did not speak of their society. They depicted awe-inspiring environments. Jane Austen's motive is of course, profoundly different from theirs. She is a realist, and is concerned with the environment she lives in. She abandons sensibility and sentimentality in her presentation of the fear of her characters.

Jane Austen is also culturally different from the Gothic novelists. She, unlike them, believes in the traditional Augustan values. Her Northanger Abbey is really, a literary burlesque. In it

she deigns to notice the Terror school and guys it deliciously. The ancient documents discovered in a drawer by Catherine Morland turn out to be an old laundry list. In the same way the false emotions of Romanticism are shown up for what they are -- the products of an unfeeling mind which are banished when real feeling enters in.²

1. Ibid, p. 98

2. S. Diana Neill, A Short History of the English Novel, (London, 1964), p. 148

The novel exhibits two sets of values : one is that of illusionary world where Catherine Morland is eager to experience the mystery and wonder, fear and suspense, sensation and terror of the Gothic world; the other is the real world where she comes in contact with different people and learns the realities of life. These two worlds are contrasted in Northanger Abbey to mock at the presentation of the absurdities as well as grosser emotions of life in Gothic novels. The plots of these novels are designed for the purpose of providing the readers with the thrills of horror. Realists like Jane Austen reject this genre of literature. They are wide apart from the Gothic novelists who, not without ingenuity, in fact with abundance display of it, and speak of

The remote and ruined castle with its antique courts, deserted chambers, pictured windows that exclude the light, haunted galleries amid whose mouldering gloom is heard the rustle of an unseen robe, a sigh, a hurried footfall where no mortal step should tread;... the huge fortress set high upon some spar of the Apennines, dark machicolated battlements and sullen towers which frown o'er the valleys below, a lair of masterless men, through whose dim corridors prowl armed bandits, whose halls ring with hideous revelry or anon are silent as the grave; ...¹

1. Montague Summers, quoted in The Castle of Otranto, The Mysteries of Udolpho, Northanger Abbey, ed. Andrew Wright, (New York, 1963), x

II

This, in brief, is the novelistic tradition of fear that Jane Austen had behind her. In her own presentation of fear she is, however, different from her predecessors', for she is not interested in people seeking to reach out of their society. To her, human existence is necessarily social, and a novelist's job is to sketch the characters' interpersonal relationship as well as make individual case-studies. Her characters live in fresh air, belong to a community, and face the realities of life in a routine and organized society. Jane Austen is supremely successful in demonstrating the psychological and social mechanisms of life. In presenting the familiar everyday human relationships of her characters, she does not depict the fear of death, diseases, despair, or of other uncertainties of life; but delineates in certain real situations the fear of the middle class in class society. In her novels, the middle-class on account of their social fear keep themselves at a distance from the people of their superior station, and speak cautiously before them. They cannot be easy and free before the gentry and the aristocracy, for their class remains, what D. H. Lawrence stated later in altogether different circumstances, a gulf hindering the human flow.¹

Jane Austen's concentration is on social fear as well as on economic insecurity of the people of her own class. She sees these as important factors in the determination of their conduct and outlook. Economic insecurity affects social relationship, and is the

1. Lawrence says, "Class makes a gulf, across which all the best human flow is lost" in 'Autobiographical Sketch,' Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal, (London, 1969), p. 4

cause of many personal and social problems of her characters. The sensible characters, who suffer from the fear of economic insecurity, suppress their emotion and cannot develop their personality properly; while the insensible become faithless, ungrateful and hypocritical.

Her world is moral, albeit secular. Providence does not reward her characters as Richardson's are rewarded. Unlike Defoe or the Gothic novelists, she does not tell of fear that is evoked by the devastating power of nature, or by the doings of the supernatural. Her observation about the fears of her characters is always realistic, partly because she is "herself deeply and personally involved with the social phenomena which she describes and passes judgment on."¹ In each novel, we see her trying to solve the problems of her characters in a proper as well as rational way.

1. Donald J. Greene, 'Jane Austen and the Peerage,' Jane Austen : A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ian Watt, (New Jersey, 1963), p. 162

Jane Austen would not have been a great artist that she is, if she had not been realistic in presenting the social relationships of different classes, and her characters' concern for and attitude towards one another. Her works, in relation to her life, reveal that she was greatly influenced by her own class background as well as by her experience of life. The influence can be seen in many areas, and particularly in her depiction of the fear of the middle class. Her concern with the public role of the leisured class on the one hand, and that of the middle class on the other, tells us much about her gentle but wide-awake awareness of the society in which she was born and brought up. Despite her family background, she got the opportunities of mixing with the gentry and the aristocracy and observed carefully their snobbery, arrogance, and superciliousness of which she herself became a victim. Park Honan remarks :

It is clear that Jane Austen met with certain rudness in Kent that was more subtle than the bluff, superior manner of Aunt Perrot at Bath, and the satirical bite and comic arrogance in her fiction respond to the society she knew most intimately and found at the fringes of her family.¹

In the later half of her life, Jane Austen was much disturbed by economic insecurity as well. After the death of her father in 1805, she realized most acutely the importance of money and property

1. Jane Austen : Her Life, (London, 1987), p. 118

as essential for the leading of a normal social life. This is very clearly illustrated by her letters to Cassandra written both before and after her father's death. Living with her parents at Steventon in a sunny atmosphere, she wrote in 1798 about the people of her parish : "People get so horribly poor & economical in this part of the World, that I have no patience with them."¹ At that time, she frequently participated in 'social rituals' like balls, parties, etc., and had no reason to feel insecure financially, and naturally had 'no patience with' the poor. But after the death of her father

There were immediate problems to be faced. The Austens had never been rich; now they were likely to be poor. Mr Austen's stipend died with him, and his wife and daughters were faced with the possibility of having to live on an income of two hundred and ten pounds a year.²

In such circumstances, Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra on August 24, 1805 :

As I find on looking into my affairs, that instead of being very rich I am likely to be very poor, I cannot afford more than ten shillings for Sackree; but as we are to meet in Canterbury I need not have mentioned this. It is as well, however, to prepare you for the sight of a Sister sunk in poverty, that it may not overcome your Spirits.³

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1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 41
 2. Elfrida Vipont, A Little Bit of Ivory, (London, 1977), p. 98
 3. Jane Austen's Letters, Op. cit., p. 163

It is not unreasonable to assume that the economic crisis of her has been reflected in her presentation of men and women belonging to middle class. Her experience of life was perhaps the most acceptable reason why she, after her return to a settled domestic atmosphere at Chawton, revised her works written before her father's death. A. Walton Litz tells of the elaborate revision of Pride and Prejudice, and views that there is certainly a substantial difference between the early draft and the published one :

But the late revisions of Pride and Prejudice (c. 1811-12) were so elaborate, and penetrated so deeply into the novel's language and action, that they amounted to a re-seeing of the entire work. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the details of First Impressions, we can say with some assurance that the finished novel was far removed from this early draft.¹

The life that Jane Austen spent between 1805 and 1809 taught her how important it was for an honourable living to have economic security and a settled domestic atmosphere. She seems to have lost her energies during that period because of her dependence on others, and of living in the houses of her brothers and relations. She started writing The Watson but could not finish it within that long period. In fact, the circumstances of her own life offer us a key to a fuller understanding of her novels. Brian Southam is right in viewing that :

1. Jane Austen : A Study of Her Artistic Development, (London, 1965), p. 97

The circumstances of her life also help us to understand certain qualities in her writing : its highly personal tone; its allusiveness; its dramatic aspect, in the prominence of dialogue and in the scenelike staging of the characters and action; and its concentration on personal and family relationships.¹

It is possible to point out that the relationship between the Dashwoods and Mr and Mrs John Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility is more or less a dramatization of Edward Knight's and his wife's attitude towards Jane Austen and her mother and sister. Somerset Maugham finds a correlation between the episode in the novel and that happened in Jane Austen's life :

When Edward Austen inherited Godmersham and Chawton, he rose in the world, and his marriage allied him with the best families of the County. We know nothing of what Jane and Cassandra thought of his wife. Dr. Chapman tolerantly suggests that it was her loss which made Edward feel "that he ought to do more for his mother and sisters, and induced him to offer them a cottage on one or other of his estates." He had been in possession of them for twelve years. It seems to me more likely that his wife thought they did enough for the members of his family if they were asked at intervals to pay them visits, and did not welcome the notion of having them permanently settled on her door-step; and it was her death that freed him to do what he liked with his own property.* If this were so, it cannot have escaped Jane's sharp eyes, and may well

1. 'Jane Austen,' British Writers vol. IV, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert, (New York, 1981), p. 107

* Maugham's assumption seems to be true; Edward's wife died in 1808, and Jane Austen with her mother and sister settled at Chawton in 1809.

have suggested those passages in Sense and Sensibility in which she describes John Dashwood's treatment of his stepmother and her daughters.¹

Her elder sister, Cassandra Austen, was engaged to be married to Thomas Fowle, a young clergyman with insufficient private fortune to permit an immediate union. His economic insecurity made him go to the West Indies as a chaplain, and there he died of yellow fever. "This little domestic tragedy caused great and lasting grief" to all the members of the family. But since Jane Austen was especially devoted to her sister, her grief was "the deepest of all."² Jane Austen must have remembered the tragic incident while dealing with the sorrows and miseries of those young men and women, who intend to get married but suffer from economic insecurity. In Sense and Sensibility, Edward Ferrars's suffering is most acute in this respect. Captain Wentworth, in Persuasion, was refused by the Elliots in consideration of his poor financial condition; and this refusal led him to join the Navy in quest of his fortune.

Instances like these suggest that the novelist made use in her novels of what she experienced and observed in society about the aspiration, limitation, ideology, and tension of her own class. In her works, the gentry and the middle class live in more or less the same circle, enjoy the same balls and parties; but despite all these the former, very often, fails to be easy towards the latter because of many factors, of which birth and fortune are the most

1. Ten Novels and Their Authors, (Melbourne, 1954), p. 52

2. J. E. Austen Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen, (London, 1906), p. 26

important. Jane Austen never fails to highlight these factors in showing the unequal relationships between the gentry and the middle class, and in displaying the sorrows and sufferings, fears and problems of the latter.

III

Jane Austen's novels reveal the England of her time as a land of high contrasts and gross inequality in living standards and conditions, between the aristocracy and gentry on the one hand and the middle class on the other. Economic historians see the very years of her life as the hey-day of the English leisured class, and a time of great hardship for the common people who experienced harsh economic realities to live honourably.¹ Since the aristocracy and gentry governed society, and since the prosperity of the middle class depended heavily on pleasing those better off and better placed social members, the middle-class were apprehensive of them. Jane Austen was very much aware of the subordinate position of the middle class, and depicted their fears, anxieties and problems in her works with great care and attention.

Emma, which was published in 1816, is the work of a mature novelist. In this novel, the novelist's keen observation penetrates deeply into the delicate aspects of human heart, and achieves "the means for expressing that synthesis of opposing values which had long been her goal."² In fact, Emma marks more earnestly than her earlier novels a tender and sympathetic humanity, which certainly distinguishes the novel as the work of a great humanist. But at the same time, Jane Austen is equally aware in this novel, as she is in her other works, of the necessity of depicting the unequal social relationship between the gentry and the people of her own class, and to display the fear of the latter.

1. Brian Wilks, Jane Austen, (Hamlyn, 1978), pp. 10-13

2. A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen : A Study of her Artistic Development, (London, 1965), p. 132

In the Highbury society, Emma undermines her inferiors as she is proud of her superior class position. The Coles are friendly, liberal and unpretending but since they are people of "low origin, in trade, and only moderately genteel" (ch. 25), Emma considers that it is impertinent on their part to invite the Woodhouses. Therefore, her initial reaction to the invitation she receives to dine at their house is to reject it :

The regular and best families Emma could hardly suppose they would presume to invite - neither Donwell, nor Hartfield, nor Randalls. Nothing should tempt her to go, if they did; and she regretted that her father's known habits would be giving her refusal less meaning than she could wish. The Coles were very respectable in their way, but they ought to be taught that it was not for them to arrange the terms on which the superior families would visit them. This lesson, she very much feared, they would receive only from herself; she had little hope of Mr Knightley, none of Mr Weston. (ch. 25)

But Emma changes her mind because Mr Knightley and Mr Weston accept their invitation, and because the Coles invite the Woodhouses expressing their great honour for them :

The Coles expressed themselves so properly -- there was so much real attention in the manner of it -- so much consideration for her father. 'They would have solicited the honour earlier, but had been waiting the arrival of a folding-screen from London, which they hoped might keep Mr Woodhouse from any draught of air, and therefore induce him the more readily to give them the honour of his company.' (ch. 25)

This invitation episode makes it clear that, even, at the time of the increasing prosperity of the middle class, the Coles are obliged to please the gentry, and the gentry still desires to be treated with the utmost deference. The Coles are in their prosperity and 'second only to the family at Hartfield' in fortune and style of living. And yet, considering their background in trade they are afraid of claiming themselves respectable in social hierarchy, and suffer from social fear. Their change in the material circumstances is one of the reasons that makes Emma yield to accept their invitation. And it is the same process of change that, later on, makes the aristocracy learn to respect the middle class in Persuasion -- Jane Austen's last novel.

Emma shows much discrimination in her behaviour when she speaks with the people of her lower station. She displays an aversion towards Miss Bates throughout the novel, and mocks and disparages her many times just to remind her of her position in society. A simple and plain old maid as Miss Bates is, Emma finds her too good natured and too silly to suit her. Mrs Elton is socially inferior but she is associated by family with new money and trade. Unlike the Coles, she seeks praise, wishes to control others, and needs to be recognised as first in importance. Her speech and manners are frequently set off against those of the landed gentry among whom she lives. Emma is never comfortable in her association, and is genuinely disturbed by her words, but is unable to offend her as she can do in the case of Miss Bates. When Mrs Elton offers to sponsor Miss Woodhouse in Bath by providing an introduction to a friend of hers there, Emma feels humiliated :

The idea of her being indebted to Mrs Elton for what was called in introduction -- of her going into public under the auspices of a friend of Mrs Elton's, probably some vulgar, just made a shift to live ! -- The dignity of Miss Woodhouse, of Hartfield, was sunk indeed ! (ch. 32)

Emma is outraged and indignant but restrains "herself ... from any of the reprooofs she could have given" and then "to prevent further outrage and indignation, changed the subject directly." (ch. 32).

Emma is shocked when Mr Elton proposes to her. Her pride is mortified since the clergyman does not regard her as inestimably above him, rather he wishes to make her his equal from the height of her illusory grandeur. In order to restore her peace of mind she thinks :

Perhaps it was not fair to expect him to feel how very much he was her inferior in talent, and all the elegancies of mind He must know that the Woodhoses had been settled for several generations at Hartfield, the younger branch of a very ancient family -- and that the Eltons were nobody. (ch. 16)

Emma is so conscious of her social status that she becomes angry when it is challenged by someone inferior to her in rank. But she considers her rivalry with Mr Knightley quite differently from those which we have just talked about. She acknowledges Donwell to be the equal of Hartfield in consequence, and takes pride in her sister's marriage with the Knightleys. Her rivalry with Mr Knightley is in the areas of perception and judgement. But above all, she has the reverence for this respectable gentleman. To Emma,

social relationship is directly dependent on birth and property qualifications : Miss Bates and Jane Fairfax have none of these, and therefore they are socially ignored; Mrs Elton has only money, she is partly accepted; while Mr Knightley is fully valued, for he qualified in respect of both. In Emma, the members of the middle class, despite their progress in coming out as a force in society, remain socially inferior, and most of them suffer from social fear.

The presentation of fear in the earlier works of Jane Austen is more acute and clear than that in Emma. The world she represents in her first published novel Sense and Sensibility, is essentially an eighteenth-century world in its belief, habit and conventions. In this novel, although Jane Austen accepts the inherited social form, she is dissatisfied with it, and is unfailingly critical of it. The homeless Dashwoods, Edward Ferrars and the like are victims of the traditional social system. The novel's plot gives us many opportunities for investigating the fears of these people.

In Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen exhibits the fear of economic insecurity most acutely in her presentation of Edward Ferrars. Edward, in his appearance, seems to be a despondent young man who, almost throughout the novel, suppresses his emotion and remains unattractive. In the action of the novel, whatever he says or does makes him seem very damp company. Unlike her other heroes, Edward Ferrars is quite unhappy and cannot enjoy the pleasures of life. He plays a secondary role, and the view that of all Jane Austen's heroes he, in fact, is the most inadequate in relation to

the world he belongs to is quite justified.¹ But it is remarkable to note that in the last two chapters (49 & 50), the Edward Ferrars we meet is not the same Edward we knew before. He is now a radically changed man and is full of life, spirit and enthusiasm of a lover. The reserved and grave Edward is now open and cheerful. Within a short time he does a lot of things which he had not been able to do during the long period of the story :

... about three hours after his arrival he had secured his lady, engaged her mother's consent, and was not only in the rapturous profession of the lover, but, in the reality of reason and truth, one of the happiest of men. His situation, indeed, was more than commonly joyful. He had more than the ordinary triumph of accepted love to swell his heart and raise his spirits He was brought, not from doubt or suspense, but from misery to happiness; and the change was openly spoken in such a genuine, flowing, grateful cheerfulness as his friends had never witnessed in him before. (ch. 49)

Towards the end of the story, Edward proves himself adequate enough to be a hero. But the reason why he remained passive and dispirited before lies in his apprehension of being disinherited by his mother for his secret engagement to Lucy Steele. Although he is the eldest son of a very rich man, he does not have the property which to Jane Austen is an essential prerequisite for a good and happy family life. He has no professional means to earn money either. The whole of his fortune depends on the will of his mother. The members of his family wish him to see in a good social position, and expect

1. S. I. Choudhury, 'Jane Austen's Heroes : Are they Adequate ?'
The Dacca University Studies, Vol. X, June 1961, Part 1, pp. 130-31

that he would marry a rich girl like Miss Morton, the daughter of Lord Morton. But Edward in his early youthful infatuation had become indiscreetly engaged to a vulgar and mean minded girl, Lucy Steele whom he does not love any longer, but as a true Augustan feels himself bound in honour to respect his engagement. He cannot reveal his sentiment to anybody else for fear of his mother. He knows it well that as the connection would be disgraceful to the members of his family, they would be unanimous in disapproving it; and the revelation of the secret engagement would displease Mrs Ferrars, and she would have no scruple in disinheriting him. The engagement is, therefore, kept secret, but it has become "a continual source of disquiet and regret to him" (ch. 49). Living under the dominion of his mother, Edward loses his vitality, and this is one of the reasons why we do not find in him the kind of independence and straightforwardness we admire in other heroes of Jane Austen. Edward is conscious of his unfortunate situation of life. He tells Mrs Dashwood why he is in wretched spirits, melancholy state of mind, and dissatisfied at his own prospects :

It has been, and is, and probably will always be a heavy misfortune to me, that I have had no necessary business to engage me, no profession to give me employment or afford me anything like independence. But unfortunately my own nicety and the nicety of my friends, have made me what I am, an idle, helpless being. (ch. 19)

Edward's sense of insecurity has made him much too fettered, and much too diffident. His want of openness and of consistency disappoint and mortify Elinor severely whenever he comes in contact

with her. Marianne, a girl of sensibility, is not satisfied with his reciting the poems of Cowper. She says, "it would have broken my heart, had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility" (ch. 3). Plagued by his mother and sister to choose a profession or a wife, and in showing honour to his engagement to Lucy, Edward suffers much for his inability to express his genuine love for Elinor. His miseries rise to the climax when the secret comes out, and Mrs Ferrars loses no time in turning him out of doors and cutting him off with two thousand pounds, transferring the rest of his heritage to his younger brother, Robert. Poor Edward decides to go to Oxford to take orders. But before his departure, when he is informed of the unexpected offer from Colonel Brandon of the living of Delaford, he becomes spirited and begins to show his ecstasy. He feels so grateful to Colonel Brandon that he tells Elinor : "I must hurry away, then to give him those thanks which you will not allow me to give you; to assure him that he has made me a very -- an exceedingly happy man." (ch. 40) On hearing of the living, though the income is only £ 200, Edward changes remarkably. He is relieved of his sense of economic insecurity, and is in a good spirit which none has seen in him before. The offer of Colonel Brandon greatly eases his difficulties in raising a family. The independence he gains now is the reason of his power and strength to be happy and cheerful.

Selfish as she is, Lucy could not become happy with the Delaford living of Edward. She breaks off her engagement to win Robert Ferrars. Edward is honourably released from his boyish engagement, and his pleasure knows no bound. As soon as he is freed from Lucy, he leaves

Oxford for Barton Cottage to ask for Elinor's hand with all the fervour of a lover. "His heart was now open to Elinor, all its weaknesses, all its errors confessed, and his first boyish attachment to Lucy treated with all the philosophic dignity of twenty-four" (ch. 49). Jane Austen shows that Edward's fear of economic insecurity hindered him in developing his potentialities. No sooner had he been freed from his insecurities of life than he became spirited as well as wilful. He is now able to extort his mother's consent to marry Elinor, although Mrs Ferrars considers it as imprudent as his engagement to Lucy. At the end of the novel, Edward, like the other heroes of Jane Austen, becomes quite happy in his family life. Mrs Jennings on his first visit to Delaford "found in Elinor and her husband, as she really believed, one of the happiest couples in the world" (ch. 50).

Both in function and treatment Willoughby is the anti-thesis to Edward Ferrars. Yet both have the same social disadvantage, that of economic insecurity. But Willoughby, romantic in disposition as he is, does not think of his future in the same way as Edward does. Unlike Edward, he is uncommonly handsome, ebullient, and his manners are frank and graceful. His superficial glammers and activities infatuate Marianne to fall deeply in love with him. In a short time, they became great lovers and behaved as though they had been engaged. But only after a few days, Willoughby announces that he must go to London, not saying why. He hopes to gain personal advantage from concealment. Marianne has no property, and so of course Willoughby will gain nothing if he marries her. For this reason, he abandons Marianne, and goes to London to find a more profitable match than her.

Willoughby's fortune was never large, and he had always been in debt, trusting to the benevolent intention of Mrs Smith whose heir he expected to be. But when she learned that he had seduced and deserted a young girl, Eliza William -- a near connection of Colonel Brandon -- and was not willing to marry the unfortunate girl, she formally dismissed him from her favour and her house. Willoughby, excusing himself on the score of poverty, gives up all hope of marrying Marianne, although he knows her to be devoted to him. When Marianne comes to London and very eagerly waits to meet him, he avoids her; and finally turns his back on her at a party. He, as an unprincipled lover, dishonours the ardent love of his counterpart just to make a mercenary marriage with the intention of gaining economic security. Jane Austen mocks at such an attitude of youngmen of her time in writing to Cassandra in 1799 (before the publication of Sense and Sensibility) about a Jeffereys who is not unlike Willoughby :

The partnership between Jeffereys, Toomer, and Legge is dissolved. The two latter are melted away into nothing, and it is to be hoped that Jeffereys will soon break, for the sake of a few heroines whose money he may have.¹

Jane Austen's perception was clear, and the point expressed here is very explicit. In her works, although she does not make her views explicit, her perception remains, and works silently. In the characters of Willoughby and Wickham she demonstrates that financially insecure young men are ready to break off their love relationship with the poor girls. Since Lydia Bennet, in Pride and

1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, (London, 1969), p. 53

Prejudice, has no fortune of her own Wickham does not display an eagerness to marry her after their elopement. Darcy makes the marriage possible because he, as Elizabeth learns from Mrs Gardiner, "gave the money, paid the fellow's debts, and got him his commission !" (ch. 59) on behalf of the Bennets. Willoughby cuts off his relationship with Marianne, who is poor, and marries Miss Grey whom he does not love, but whose money he needs to live well. On hearing of the serious illness of Marianne, he comes to Cleveland and makes the dramatic confession to Elinor that he married Miss Grey only for her money :

My fortune was never large, and I had always been expensive, always in the habit of associating with people of better income than myself. Every year since my coming of age, or even before, I believe, had added to my debts; and though the death of my old cousin, Mrs Smith, was to set me free, yet that event being uncertain, and possibly far distant, it had been for sometime my intention to re-establish my circumstances by marrying a woman of fortune. (ch. 44)

Like Wickham's and that of Jane Austen's own Jeffereys', Willoughby's financial insecurity affects him much in formation his character and outlook. By nature spendthrift and libertine, he has become faithless and ungrateful owing to lack of adequate means. His marriage with Miss Grey is not a desirable one, though he is able to clear his debts, and by worldly standard becomes a fortunate man.

Since, in Jane Austen, characters' status and economic circumstances are the two most important factors in determining and establishing social relationships, Raymond Williams aptly says, "we must add from the evidence of the novels a direct preoccupation with estates' incomes and social position, which are seen as indispensable elements of all the relationships that are projected and formed."¹ Jane Austen shows particular skill in portraying her characters' social relationships in the world they live. In Mansfield Park, the Prices do not enjoy good social position, nor do they have adequate money to live in affluence; and these two factors virtually determine their unequal relationship with the Bertrams. Fanny Price, who is by nature timid and submissive, comes to Mansfield Park for the first time as a little girl of ten. The initial behaviour of Sir Thomas, the snobbery of Tom, Maria, and Julia Bertrams she found puzzling. Since she is a dependent on the Bertrams, almost everybody neglects her. The continual maltreatment of Mrs Norris makes her realize the importance of economic solvency in life. Mrs Norris's behaviour towards Fanny and the Miss Bertrams is quite different, although she is the common aunt of them all. It is for Fanny's economic and social situation that Mrs Norris is able to instruct her most crudely :

I do beseech and entreat you not to be putting yourself forward, and talking and giving your opinion as if you were one of your cousins, as if you were dear Mrs Bushworth or Julia. That will never do, believe me. Remember, wherever you are, you must be the lowest and last. (ch. 23)

1. The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, (London, 1970), p. 19

This distinction menaces Fanny's sense of security, and she lives in fear and anxiety at Mansfield Park. Although her performance everywhere is impressive, and her manners admirable, she is not invited to join in the conversation of the others. She suffers much from loneliness and "Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions" (ch. 8). Clearly, Fanny is not allowed to establish an honourable relationship with the Bertrams for her poor family background.

During the absence of Sir Bertram, Fanny's relationship with Tom Bertram and Mrs Norris became worse. Fanny had been against the Mansfield theatrical from first to last judging rightly the family tradition. When Tom tries to extort her consent to act in the play, Lovers' Vow, she earnestly requests him not to include her in it. Her polite refusal irritates Mrs Norris to rebuke Fanny, and to bring the charge of obstinacy and ingratitude against her : "... but I shall think her a very obstinate, ungrateful girl, if she does not do what her aunt and cousins wish her -- very ungrateful indeed, considering who and what she is" (ch. 15). Everywhere she is discriminated against and consequently her motives are misunderstood, and feelings disregarded. Instead of enjoying the company of her relations, Fanny experiences the pains of tyranny, and of ridicule and neglect.

General Tilney in Northanger Abbey behaves warmly with Catherine Morland thinking her an heiress. But when he hears that the Morlands are not wealthy, he misbehaves with Catherine and sends her home in disgrace and dishonour. She is guilty only of being less rich than

the General supposed her to be. Examples of Fanny Price and Catherine Morland illustrate clearly that social relationships between people of unequal birth and fortune were not acceptable to the gentry and aristocracy, although both the heroines by their own merits became, at long last, wives of the younger sons -- Edmund Bertram and Henry Tilney respectively.

In Mansfield Park, the economic insecurity even affects the father-daughter relationship in the Price family. Fanny experiences this at Portsmouth. She returns home after a long time in the hope of getting parental love and affection. But she is shocked when her father acknowledging his marriageable daughter pretends to forget her again :

With an acknowledgement that he had quite forgot her, Mr Price now received his daughter; and, having given her a cordial hug, and observed that she was grown into a woman, and he supposed would be wanting a husband soon, seemed very much inclined to forget her again. (ch. 38)

Oblivious of his parental obligation, Mr Price behaves in a manner unbecoming of a father. His distorted vision, as it is reflected here, threatens family relationship. The fact is that since Mr Price is in want of money, he fears to pay attention to a marriageable daughter thinking of his immediate duties towards her. He knows it very well that it would be beyond his means to give her daughter in marriage to an eligible young man.

The Bertrams can easily establish social relationship with their outer world. The Crawfords and the Rushworths come in their

circle and enjoy their company. Since Fanny is, above all, a relation to the Bertrams the Crawfords are interested in her. Mary Crawford is pleased to hear that her brother is determined to marry Fanny. She expresses her joy :

There is not a better girl in the world, and you do not want for fortune; and as to her connections, they are more than good. The Bertrams are undoubtedly some of the first people in this country. She is niece to Sir Thomas Bertram; that will be enough for the world (ch. 30)

Fanny's social qualification is her connection with the Bertrams, and nothing more. Had Fanny lived with her parents at Portsmouth she would not have got such attention from the young people like the Crawfords. The novel reveals that Mrs Price is almost forgotten by Lady Bertram, and the two sisters do not meet for about twenty years. Such cold-relationship exists between the sisters because of their differences in respect of their fortune and social position. In Sense and Sensibility also the rich relations of the Dashwood sisters maintain a distance from them. Since the sisters, after their father's death, are degraded in their social position and cannot live in affluence, Mrs John Dashwood and Mrs Ferrars are cold towards them. In London, Mrs John Dashwood

met her husband's sisters without any affection, and almost without having anything to say to them; for of the quarter of an hour bestowed on Berkeley Street she sat at least seven minutes and a half in silence. (ch. 34)

With the shrinking of their income, the Dashwood sisters are no more wrothy of the company of their in-laws, though their manners,

behaviour and understanding are excellent. Mrs John Dashwood is eager to enjoy the friendship of Lady Middleton when she meets her. But Jane Austen ridicules their relationship :

There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides which mutually attracted them; and they sympathized with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour, and a general want of understanding. (ch. 34)

Jane Fairfax, who is elegant, intelligent, principled and more accomplished than Emma, fears to mix with the latter on equal terms as she is in want of money. In all other considerations, she is an appropriate and equal companion for any society. Emma overlooks Jane Fairfax's merits, and her (Emma's) snobbery prevents her from establishing harmonious social relationship with this girl of poor means. Similarly, it is for her social vanity that Emma dislikes Robert Martin who is a quiet, sensible, and well-mannered farmer. Jane Austen is critical of the unjust valuation of the merits of the social inferiors by a snob like Emma. And thus she exposes the meanness of her society's motives, and makes clear to us the cause of her sensible characters' careful avoidance of the social company of their superiors.

Most of the sensible members of the middle class in Jane Austen are very much afraid of the supercilious behaviour as well as of the arrogance of the nobility. They maintain a distance from the aristocracy so that they may not be the victims of that class's whims and caprices. Mr Gardiner, one of the novelist's favourite characters, who is most warmly welcomed at Pemberley, and gets

the invitation 'with the greatest civility' to fish in Darcy's stream, changes his decision of fishing there at last. He fears the whims of the aristocracy and tells Elizabeth Bennet about it :

"But perhaps he may be a little whimsical in his civilities," replied her uncle. "Your great men often are; and therefore I shall not take him at his word about fishing, as he might change his mind another day, and warn me off his grounds." (ch. 43)

Mr Gardiner's fear is rational in the context of his society, and Jane Austen has no remarks to make about it. Perhaps she supports him, considering it to be normal and rational. In one of her letters to Cassandra Jane Austen speaks of her own apprehension of Lord Spencer to whom her father applied for the promotion of her brother, Charles Austen. Her fear seems more acute than Gardiner's as she writes :

The Lords of the Admiralty will have enough of our applications at present, for I hear from Charles that he has written to Lord Spencer himself to be removed. I am afraid his Serene Highness will be in a passion, and order some of our heads to be cut off.¹

Often in her letters Jane Austen lets us know of her poor economic condition, and its impact on the formation of her attitude towards the rich around her. For example, a letter of 1807 says that she suffered from inferiority complex and, therefore, did not consider herself and her brother Frank Austen worthy enough to mix well with

1. Jane Austen's Letter, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 46

the rich Lances, their new acquaintance at Southampton. She is frank :

They [the Lances] live in a handsome style and are rich, and she [Mrs Lance] seemed to like to be rich, and we gave her to understand that we were far from being so; she will soon feel therefore that we are not worth her acquaintance.¹

Jane Austen's experience of life and her observation of society, as revealed in her letters finds its artistic counterpart in her presentation of fears of the middle class in their relationships with the rich social leaders.

We notice in Northanger Abbey that Catherine Morland experiences her social fear in coming in contact with General Tilney who likes to fancy himself an aristocrat. She realizes that her family background is inferior to the Tilneys', and feels a sense of unease during all her encounters with the General. Actually Catherine fails to understand the Tilneys, as the General cleverly conceals his selfishness. However, on the day of her departure from Bath to Northanger Abbdy she was asked to have her breakfast with the Tilneys. But at the table, Catherine became agitated and fearful, for the opportunity of sitting together with a family, superior to hers in every consideration, caused great excitement on her nerves. The novelist tells us of her state of mind :

... but so great was her agitation in finding herself as one of the family, and so fearful was she of not doing exactly what was right, and of not being able to preserve their good opinion, that, in the embarrassment of the first five minutes, she could almost have

1. Ibid. p. 175

wished to return with him [Mr Allen] in Pulteney Street. (ch. 20)

Fanny Price's experience is almost identical in Mansfield Park when she is introduced into the great house of Sir Bertram. She feels uneasy :

Afraid of every body, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left, she knew not how to look up, and could scarcely speak to be heard, or without crying She could scarcely swallow two mouthfuls before tears interrupted her, and sleep seeming to be her likeliest friend, she was taken to finish her sorrows in bed. (ch. 2)

In both cases the young heroines -- Catherine and Fanny -- meet people of the upper class, and Jane Austen describes their reaction in a new social context, and displays their very natural fear and anxiety.

In Pride and Prejudice, Mr Bennet, a lesser gentry and of course a gentleman, expresses his anxiety of class society when he hears of the proposal of marriage of his daughter to Darcy. Since Darcy is an aristocrat, and since there exists a considerable difference in the social scale between Darcy and Elizabeth, Mr Bennet doubts whether her daughter would be able to enjoy a happy conjugal life with that aristocrat. He expresses his concern by asking Elizabeth : "What are you doing ? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man ? Have not you always hated him ?" (ch. 59) And then he adds : "Or, in other words you are determined to have him. He is rich, to be sure, and you may have more fine clothes and fine carriages than Jane. But will they make you happy ?" (ch. 59) It appears to us that Mr Bennet does not understand his

daughter as much as he thinks; but he understands his society quite well, of course. And his justifiable apprehension of the aristocracy makes him fear to consider Mr Darcy his son-in-law.

The Lucases and Mr Collins, who are a step down in social hierarchy than the Bennets, display their fear to a greater extent. At Rosings, their subordinate roles look so humiliating for their class that Jane Austen does not approve of what they do. David Monaghan rightly remarks about their behaviour : "The behaviour of Collins and the Lucases at Rosings display the middle class at its worst."¹ Mr Collins is the type who is ready to admire and respect his patroness all the time to please her. His family background is so low that the association as well as the favour of an aristocrat has "made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility" (ch. 15). Mr Collins disappoints Elizabeth Bennet both by his words and activities in connection with Lady Catherine. He wishes that Elizabeth should not put on best of her clothes to go before his patroness. He says to Elizabeth :

Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear cousin, about your apparel. Lady Catherine is far from requiring that elegance of dress in us, which becomes herself and daughter. I would advise you merely to put on whatever of your clothes is superior to the rest, there is no occasion for anything more. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed. She likes to have the distinction of rank preserved. (ch. 29)

1. Jane Austen : Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), p. 81

Since Mr Collin's livelihood depends on pleasing Lady Catherine de Bourgh, he tries his best to humour her. In fact, his words and activities are an indirect expression of his acute sense of the fear he feels for Lady Catherine.

The arrival of Lady Catherine de Bourgh at Longbourn is an unexpected incident. Mrs Bennet is in amazement in having a guest of such importance in her house. She receives her with the utmost politeness. Although her guest is not at all cordial to her, she feels herself 'delighted to speak to a Lady Catherine' (ch. 56). Mrs Bennet behaves 'with great civility' and tries to earn her favour, but in vain. Despite Lady Catherine's coarse and impolite behaviour, Mrs Bennet praises her as "a very fine-looking woman ! and her calling here was prodigiously civil ! for she only came, I suppose, to tell us the Collinses were well" (ch. 56). The visit of Lady Catherine at Longbourn reveals that Mrs Bennet, who is the daughter of an attorney, is the true child of the eighteenth century. She, like many other members of her class, accepts the social differences and inequalities of her time cheerfully. The rudeness of Lady Catherine does not humiliate her, since she considers it her social duty to be respectful of the aristocracy. Charlotte Lucas, an intelligent friend of Elizabeth Bennet, has almost the same idea about the aristocracy. To her, for the aristocracy pride is an essential mark of class distinction. Darcy's pride, therefore, does not offend her as it offends Elizabeth. She, on the contrary, argues in favour of his pride :

His pride ... does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour,

should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud. (ch. 5)

Elizabeth Bennet, who is growing up in a transitional period of English history, does not honour the proud aristocracy. She is progressive in outlook and rebellious in nature, and has no fear to speak out what she feels in the face of her superiors. Jane Austen accepts as natural the idea that the people of her class are afraid of the leisured class; nevertheless she is critical of those who make themselves ridiculous in obsequiousness to the gentry and aristocracy.

A good number of middle-class characters in Jane Austen live in a narrow world, and do not engage themselves in intellectual pursuits as they suffer from various insecurities of life. The superstructure of society is beyond their comprehension. With their distorted sense of values and extremely narrow range of interests, these characters evoke our laughter. Mrs Norris's world in Mansfield Park is very limited. She is always looking for her own advantage. The Prices at Portsmouth live amidst chaos and confusion. The children are not attentive to their studies, rather they quarrel with each other. Mr Price idles away his time, while Mrs Price is always busy with her household work. Like Mrs Price, the mothers in Northanger Abbey -- Mrs Morland, Mrs Thorpe -- and in Pride and Prejudice -- Mrs Bennet -- are also busy with their children and domestic duties. The young girls like Lucy Steele and Isabella Thorpe are in pursuit of rich husbands. They think more of 'social rituals' like balls and music to catch the attention of the young men than of other things. An unsigned review in The British Critic of Dec. 1817 presents an exact representation of the young girls of

that period. Commenting on Isabella Thorpe, the reviewer writes that she

is a fine handsome girl, thinking of nothing but finery and flirting, and an exact representation of that large class of young women, in the form they assume among the gayer part of the middling ranks of society ...¹

The young people, on the other hand, are busy in quest of their fortune either by advantageous marital arrangements or by professional advancement. Thus these members of the middle class fail to understand the importance of reading good books, and of maintaining a library in their houses. Not all who have libraries -- the Bennets and the Morlands are examples -- have been able to ensure the broadening of their outlook. Isabella Thorpe reads much, but she, like Henry Tilney, cannot understand the true spirit of a book. She flirts with young men as well as with books. Mary, Elizabeth's sister, has read books but to the detriment of her naturalness.

Through her mother's as well as Edward's (her brother's) rich relations Jane Austen came into close contact with the gentry and the aristocracy, and was able to learn about the economic condition of the younger sons of their families. Since the law of inheritance was in favour of the eldest sons, the younger ones were obliged to enter a profession to maintain themselves, and consequently, they were degraded from their social position. Jane Austen focuses on the relationship of the brothers in her novels, and shows the misery

1. Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1969), p. 82

as well as financial insecurity of the younger brothers. Colonel Fitzwilliam in Pride and Prejudice is a true gentleman. Elizabeth Bennet likes him much, and even thinks of marrying him. But they are prevented from pursuing a mutual attraction by financial considerations. Colonel Fitzwilliam in his conversation with Elizabeth speaks of his disadvantageous situation in relation to Darcy. He deplores : "But I am at his [Darcy's] disposal. He arranges the business just as he pleases" (ch. 33). He further adds :

"I speak feelingly. A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence."

"In my opinion, the younger son of an earl can know very little of either. Now seriously, what have you ever known of self-denial and dependence ? when have you been prevented by want of money from going wherever you chose, or procuring anything you had a fancy for ?"

"These are home questions -- and perhaps I cannot say that I have experienced many hardships of that nature. But in matter of greater weight, I may suffer from the want of money. Younger sons cannot marry where they like."

"Unless where they like women of fortune, which I think they very often do." (ch. 33)

Edmund Bertram in Mansfield Park does not suffer from economic insecurity; but he fears the authoritative commands of Tom Bertram in absence of his father. Edmund was not at all interested to take part in the play Lovers' Vow, but at last he agreed just to please his brother and to 'protect more evils.' He wished that Fanny should

not be forced to act either, but could not support her cause openly before Tom, because he was 'unwilling to exasperate his brother by interference' (ch. 15). Edmund is unable to protest against Tom's harmful activities firmly, as he knows well that Tom would inherit Mansfield Park, and he as the clergy of the Mansfield parsonage, will have to please him.

Communication among human beings is pervasively important. For this purpose, above all, people use language. But the speech-habits of two persons are not always the same. Sometimes people are diametrically opposed to one another in their use of language. The differences in the conversational exchange contribute much to an understanding of the various characteristics of the speakers. In literature, the characters reveal themselves primarily through their language. John Odmark rightly says :

In examining the language of individual characters, the reader is able to determine how each of the characters maintains the patterns of life in the society in which he lives, and affirms his role and personality in society.¹

Like the dramatists, Jane Austen excels in her presentation of the dialogues of her characters. She makes them speak as they should do in their practical life. What a review article on Jane Austen notes is quite right :

In dialogue she also excelled. Her conversation are never bookish -- they are just what might have been said; and they are eminently characteristic Every thing that is said, however short and simple, belongs peculiarly to the person by whom it is uttered, and is indicative of their situation, or turn of mind. And yet they do not seem to talk for effect; they merely say what it seems most natural that they should have said.²

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1. An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels : Character, Value and Ironical Perspective, (Oxford, 1981), p. 129
 2. Thomas Henry Lister, 'The Superior Novelist,' Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1969), p. 114

Because of varying situation of life each of Jane Austen's characters possesses a marked idiosyncrasy in his verbal behaviour. Although the language of the aristocracy is an expression of their quest for authority, Lady Catherine's has some peculiarities of its own. She views her "language as an absolute, as a reflection of her own immutable and central place in the universe."¹ Her characteristic utterances are full of intrusive questions, and these are, to her, unshakeable pronouncement. In comparison to hers, Fanny Price's language is too feeble and unvirile. Fanny is a poor, neglected and dependent girl who passes her days in Mansfield Park in fear and anxieties. She speaks as little as possible, and never protests against any remark which she has the right to correct. Jane Austen gives evidences that class background as well as economic condition of a character is very significant in the formation of his/her thought process, and in its expression through dialogues. For example, the language Mr Darcy, Sir Bertram, and Sir Middleton use, is different from the one used by Mr Collins, Isabella Thorpe, and Lucy Steele. The latter, on account of their low family background and of their economic dependence upon others, are silly and vulgar in their verbal behaviour as much as in their social conduct.

In consideration of their verbal traits, the middle class in Jane Austen can be easily divided into two groups -- the vulgar and the sensible. The sensible are not as garrulous as the vulgar are. But both groups display their fear either directly or indirectly in the dialogues they speak. Mrs Bennet who is clearly vulgar speaks

1. Laura G. Mooneyham, Romance, Language and Education in Jane Austen's Novels, (London, 1988), p. 60

much, for she suffers from a sense of insecurity. Her vulgarity can be justified in the way Fay Weldon does :

Mrs Bennet, driven half-mad by anxiety for her five unmarried daughters, knowing they would be unprovided for when her husband died, as indeed would she, made a fool of herself in public, husband - hunting on her girls' behalf. Politeness warred, as always with desperation. Enough to give anyone the vapours !¹

The basic problems of the Bennet family are rooted in economic uncertainty. Since their property is entailed to Mr Collins, the removal of the family from Longbourn is inevitable after the death of Mr Bennet. This is the spectre that haunts Mrs Bennet without respite; and her language reflects her discomfort. She is blatantly indecorous and can never subdue her emotions. She cannot respond appropriately to the situations confronting her, and becomes irritated almost for nothing. Her verbal traits reveal that she is deeply in trouble with her five marriageable daughters who do not seem to have much of a future. In such circumstances whenever she sees incidents in favour of her, she becomes ecstatic. Lydia's elopement with Wickham earns a bad name for the Bennets, but Mrs Bennet is delighted to hear that they are going to be married :

"My dear, dear Lydia !" she cried : "this is delightful indeed ! She will be married ! I shall see her again ! she will be married at sixteen ! My good, kind brother ! I knew how it would be -- I knew he would manage everything.

1. Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen, (London, 1984), p. 27

How I long to see her ! and to see dear Wickham too ! But the clothes, the wedding clothes ! I will write to my sister Gardiner about them directly. Lizzy, my dear, run down to your father, and ask him how much he will give her. Stay, stay, I will go myself. Ring the bell, Kitty, for Hill. I will put on my things in a moment. My dear, dear Lydia ! How merry we shall be together when we meet !"
(ch. 49)

The marriage of Jane and Elizabeth makes her exuberant, and she is unable to subdue her flow of feelings. The change of Mrs Bennet's verbal behaviour before getting her daughters married and after hearing of their (Lydia's, Jane's, Elizabeth's) engagements is remarkable. She is always irrational as well as emotional in her dialogues, but her latter dialogues bear the marks of her pleasure and happiness.

The language traits of Willoughby and Wickham are helpful in understanding their fears. Both are materialists and hide their obsession behind good manners. Willoughby is often at the top of his voice to praise Marianne and the cottage, while he is with the Dashwoods at the Barton Cottage. His rhapsody on the Dashwoods' house turns him into a passionate and emotional lover : "improve this dear Cottage ! No. That I will never consent to. Not a stone must be added to its walls, not an inch to its size, if my feelings are regarded" (ch. 14). With the ardent spirit of a lover Willoughby opposes every alteration of a 'place which affection had established perfect with him' (ch. 14). Speeches like this would suggest that he is a genuine lover. But his tone falters when he meets the Dashwood sisters at a party in London. We notice that his verbal behaviour is now radically changed, as he has broken faith with Marianne as a lover. Willoughby fears the sisters and speaks a few words only. Marianne urges him to speak : "Tell me, Willoughby for Heaven's sake, tell me, What is the matter?" (ch. 28). The romantic Willoughby cannot speak now as he spoke before. He loses his moral strength, and leaves the party hastily. He also fears that his real character may be exposed to Miss Grey if he speaks much with the sisters.

Wickham's verbal manner has a contradiction of its own. He pretends to honour the demands of propriety while he speaks, and is liked by all. Elizabeth is completely taken in by his artful inversions of his own appearance and reality, and of Darcy's. Wickham is able to make others understand that he dislikes Darcy, but it is interesting to mark that he fears Darcy and avoids the party where

he (D) is likely to be seen (ch. 18); and in case they meet, he does not speak in Darcy's presence (ch. 15). In Meryton, Wickham meets Darcy but he only "touched his hat -- a salutation which Mr Darcy deigned to return" (ch. 15). The fact is that Darcy knows his past misdeeds, and that is the reason why Wickham fears to speak before him.

The language in which Edward Ferrars speaks is clearly indicative of his situation as well as turn of mind. Almost throughout the novel his verbal traits disgust others. His diction signals his self-distrust, his belittling of his ownself. His speeches become jubilant only when he is freed from his economic insecurity as well as from Lucy Steele.

Characters like Mrs Elton in Emma and Mrs Jennings in Sense and Sensibility, who are socially inferior but have enough money to live in affluence, do not fear to take part in their social conversations with their superiors, and speak spontaneously whatever occur to them. But Elinor Dashwood, Jane Fairfax, and Fanny Price belong to another group inasmuch as they do not speak freely owing to their various insecurities in life. They are not without emotions, but they are careful of their expression. Since they are regarded as inferiors, they remain depressed and speak cautiously. Their judgements and opinions are not valued properly if these are against the interest of the gentry and aristocracy. Mrs Ferrars does not think much of the pretty paintings of Elinor; she rather praises the paintings of Miss Morton at Elinor's expense. This shocks Marianne, and being greatly displeased with her (Mrs Ferrars) she says :

This is admiration of a very particular kind ! What is Miss Morton to us ? Who knows or who cares for her ? It is Elinor of whom we think and speak. (ch. 34)

Marianne is, of course, right in saying this, but the Ferrarses get angry with her, and nobody takes side with her. She could not say any more, "her spirits were quite overcome; and hiding her face on Elinor's shoulder, she burst into tears" (ch. 34). Elinor, one of the most sensible girls in Jane Austen, knows the consequence of speaking freely before her social superiors. She, therefore, fears to express what is in her mind. Similarly, Jane Fairfax and Fanny Price guard themselves against speaking freely.

Isabella Thorpe and Lucy Steele play a deeper linguistic game to win the favour of the rich. They hide their fear and try to achieve their goals using the art of flattery. Skilful as they are in the use of language, they can take part in conversation freely; and we do not notice fear in their verbal behaviour although it is impossible not to notice their grammatical errors and vulgarisms.

Since the Lucases' background is in trade, they give great importance to social status of the nobility. To them, the social position of Lady Catherine de Bourgh is so high that they cannot pick up courage to speak before her. In her presence, Sir Lucas is much too embarrassed to know what to say. His voice falters as he tries to speak. In her quiet manner, Jane Austen makes fun of the verbal behaviour as well as the pose and action of the Lucases :

In spite of having been at St. Jame's, Sir William

was so completely awed by the grandeur surrounding him that he had but just courage enough to make a very low bow, and take his seat without saying a word; and his daughter, frightened almost out of her senses sat on the edge of her chair, not knowing which way to look. (ch. 29)

Mr Collins demonstrates an exceptional verbal manner. He is, in fact, situated well enough to guarantee his future security by the grace of Lady Catherine. By all professional standards, he is unsuited to the clergy, but yet he turns out to be an ideal to Lady Catherine because of his sycophantic attention to her. He is always careful to please his patroness by his verbal idiocy. Whatever he writes or says is full of the subject of either Rosings or of Lady Catherine. Mr Collins "flatters her and broadcasts her virtue to the world,"¹ since his real motive is to secure his economic security by pleasing her.

Elizabeth's verbal habit is remarkably different from that of many of her own class. She possesses a marked idiosyncrasy of her language and behaviour. Elizabeth is a rebellious heroine, and demands that she should be treated as the daughter of a gentleman. She neither falters nor drawls in her conversational exchanges with the aristocracy, rather she has a challenging tone and outstanding personality. Very often, she enters into verbal tussles with Darcy and Lady Catherine, and makes straightforward remarks. At Rosings, she challenges Darcy personally when he was listening her music :

1. David Monaghan, Jane Austen : Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), p. 83

"You mean to frighten me, Mr Darcy, by coming in all this state to hear me ? But I will not be alarmed though your sister does play so well. There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me." (ch. 31)

Elizabeth's verbal manner shows that since she is not afraid of of her social status, or of her economic condition, she can speak courageously. But those who suffer from fear, they are sure to display the traits of it in their language. A distinct demarcation can easily be found out between the dialogues of Jane Austen's characters who suffer from fears and who do not. The sharp nervous sentences and colloquial speech-rhythms of many of her characters seem amusing, but they have greater significance in the context of their social position. Her characters' action, speech and pose, though sometimes productive of fun, have been noted with scrupulous care to reveal their states of mind. And this to be sure is not an artist's work only, it is a psychologist's as well.¹

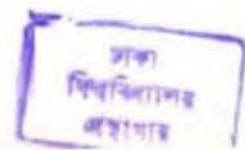
1. Leonie Villard, Jane Austen, trans. Veronica Lucas, (London, 1924), p. 105

Jane Austen lived in a transitional time of history. Born in 1775, she was necessarily a thorough child of the eighteenth century, and accepted the traditional social values and order. But by the time she published Pride and Prejudice in 1813, or wrote her last novel Persuasion in 1816, she had become an adult woman and noted with interest the differences between the two Englands of the two centuries. A remarkable change in the outward aspect as well as in the inward mind of the whole nation took place in her life time. The social codes were changing, and the gentry and the aristocracy were gradually losing their authority over society. They were no longer able to exert their power wilfully. The rising middle class, on the other hand, was then able to find an honourable place for them. Jane Austen has charted all the changes of social life in its various manifestations in her later novels, but particularly in her last one, Persuasion. Persuasion shows the culmination of this change. In this novel, the middle class suffers neither from economic insecurity nor from the hegemony of the decaying aristocracy. The presentation of the increasing influence of the middle class starts remarkably in Pride and Prejudice where Elizabeth's vigour, intelligence and personality make the aristocracy compromise with her class. Mark Schorer poses the question appropriately :

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Is not Pride and Prejudice in the very movement of its plot the representation of a great change that was overtaking society, the movement of a formerly depressed class into a position of power and of a formerly powerful class into a position of compromise ?¹

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1. Introduction to the Laurel Jane Austen, (New York, 1961), p. 8, quoted in Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, (Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 202



Elizabeth champions individualism against the old social order by her characteristic virtue of independence. She is to struggle hard for achieving harmonious relationship with the aristocracy. But in Persuasion, the situation is in favour of the middle class, and the gentry and aristocracy now accepts them in their own interest. Jane Austen seems to have lost faith in the governing class now.¹ Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice, Mrs Elton in Emma, capable of challenging the leisured class, are not supported by other members of their class. In Persuasion, however, the professionals stand in a body, and feel for each other most intimately.

For the novelist the centre of attention in Persuasion is not the big houses of the leisured class. The way of life of the naval officers, their manners and attitude are in focus. Jane Austen shows here the impact of their prize-money, earned in the Napoleonic Wars, on society. The change in the material circumstances shook the class structure, and the naval officers emerged as a new force. Jane Austen is earnest in depicting this professional class in this novel. In her representation of the transitional period, she presents the aristocracy satirically and not with amusement. The authorial comments are frequent, and therefore, Bernard J. Paris aptly remarks : "Jane Austen's love stories are always facilitated by a certain amount of authorial manipulation. In Persuasion the manipulation is much more blatant than in other novels."² The novel begins with an attack on the insularity of the British aristocracy. Sir Walter Elliot, the principal representative of this class, represents a section of

1. David Monaghan, Jane Austen : Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), p. 143

2. Character and Conflict in Jane Austen's Novels, (Brighton, 1978), pp. 140-41

society which is backward-looking and consequently failing to meet the need of the time. The Elliots cannot alter their life-style when circumstances demand it, and consequently bring punishment on themselves.

Sir Walter is bankrupt, and two of her daughters -- Elizabeth and Anne Elliot -- are withering spinsters. As he becomes more and more distressed for money, he frequently turns to the Baronetage for consolation and support, but hesitates to accept rich naval officers as tenants. On the other hand, Admiral Crofts and Captain Wentworth, who are the equivalents of the Price children in Mansfield Park, are now rich, and are triumphant over the baronet. Admiral Croft's succession to Kellynch Hall, and Sir Walter's departure from it is in keeping with the gaining in importance of the middle class. Anne Elliot accepts the succession of the 'strangers' to their house, for she

had in fact so high an opinion of the Crofts, and considered her father so very fortunate in his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example, and the poor of the best attention and relief, that however sorry and ashamed for the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners'. (ch. 13)

The phrase 'better hands' is quite appropriate for the naval officers in view of their spirited activities and of virtues like confidence and independence of mind. Captain Wentworth who has accumulated a good fortune is now able to draw the attention of the Elliots. Collectively, the sailors, in the novel, are an active representation

of the social change causing the redistribution of wealth in England, and also of the nature of the English middle class after the Napoleonic Wars. Since they have no fear of economic insecurity they can, where necessary, defy social authority. Their security has made them energetic as well as progressive in outlook. It is their work ideal that has uplifted them to their present prosperity.

The elegant young woman, Anne Elliot, having cherished love for Wentworth for a long period, becomes rebellious against her family's false vanity and chooses to marry him. For her this is, as Q.D. Leavis says, a revolutionary choice,¹ since Wentworth is quite unconnected, and is a member of the middle class. At nineteen, Anne Elliot allowed herself to be persuaded to break her engagement to Captain Wentworth considering his material disadvantages. But on his return after eight years with a fortune of £ 25000, Lady Russell gives her consent, and Sir Walter at long last approves the match happily :

When he saw more of Captain Wentworth, saw him repeatedly by daylight and eyed him well, he was very much struck by his personal claims, and felt that his superiority of appearance might be not unfairly balanced against her superiority of rank; and all this, assisted by his well-sounding name, enabled Sir Walter at last to prepare his pen with a very good grace for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour. (ch. 24)

It is of course ironical that the man Sir Walter had once held with contemptuous air should be found by him to be acceptable as a son-in-

1. Collected Essays vol. 1, ed. G. Singh, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 54

law. Nevertheless, the acceptance is not a mystery, and is indeed easy to explain in terms of the material gains newly made by Wentworth through professional means.

The rise to prosperity of the middle class, and the financial decline of the aristocracy demonstrate in Persuasion that the former has triumphed. The life style of the sailors, and their mode of speaking display their spirit of independence. Their dialogues are direct, definitive and unambiguous to a degree that we have hardly witnessed in her other works. Admiral Crofts makes his splendid comment that "The baronet will never set the Thames on fire, but there seems no harm in him" (ch. 5). His words speak of his self-confidence as also of his awareness that the aristocracy is incapable of causing any harm to him.

In her first published novel, Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen shows a desire to find reasons for accepting the inherited social form, though she was dissatisfied with it, and was critical of the role of the gentry. In all her novels she is a consistent critic of the society she had to live in. But in her last novel, Persuasion, she stands quite apart from her initial views as reflected in Sense and Sensibility. In Persuasion, Jane Austen welcomes social changes and depicts a 'basically different revolutionary society,'¹ where the increasing social importance of the middle class is secure, and the growth of individualism is encouraged. The members of the middle class, in this novel, fear no more.

Jane Austen is a critical observer of her society as well as of

1. Ibid, p. 32

human nature. It would not be unfair to see her novels as a true representation of the public roles of the people of different classes, and of their reciprocal relationships with one another. But she particularly highlights the roles of the middle class in showing why and how they behave with the people around them. Jane Austen knows that human behaviour depends much on the circumstances of life and as well on the environment in which people live. She, therefore, lets us know about the social background and economic condition of her characters before showing their distinctive behaviour, as also their fear. As a psychologist, she excels in relating their outward mode of expression with their inward thought-process. And this is one of the important reasons why her presentation of fears and anxieties of the middle class is so accurate and credible. Fears and anxieties are usually related to certain factors like employment opportunity, law of inheritance, and social usages in a social system. The change of these factors, with the mobility of social groups, affects human relationship. From Sense and Sensibility to Persuasion Jane Austen demonstrates the gradual change of her society, and its consequences on social relationships. She does not fail to criticize and ridicule the irrational display of fears of her characters as Arnold Kettle puts it, "She examines with a scrupulous yet passionate and critical precision the actual problems of her world."¹ The artificial, melodramatic world of the Gothic novel is of no importance to her, which is why in Northanger Abbey, she satirizes Catherine's horror. Catherine's mind, we know, had been so steeped in the horrors of Udolpho that she was only too ready to find parallel horrors at Northanger Abbey.

1. An Introduction to the English Novel vol. 1, (London, 1957), p. 98

Since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in society in relation to men. Even today, despite changes in the social role of women, their status is not the same as men's. In England, "the general social position of women once more declined after the sixteenth century under the impact of Puritanism and Calvinism, and reached its lowest level in the eighteenth century."¹ Women were obliged to take existence, subjecting themselves completely to male domination. They were treated, as is shown in the novels of Defoe and Richardson, like goods and chattels in the hands of the male. In the later half of the eighteenth century, their freedom continued to increase. But since they were victims of the strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men, they failed to take place in society as free and independent human beings, associated with men on a plane of intellectual and professional equality. What really humiliated intelligent eighteenth-century women was the prevailing assumption among men that women were intellectually inferior. Lord Chesterfield was not unclear when he wrote to his son that "women, especially, are to be talked to as below men and above children."² Lord Halifax, in his Advice to a Daughter, reminds his daughter :

You must first lay it down for a foundation in general, that there is inequality in the sexes; and that for the better economy of the world, the men, who were to be lawgivers, had the larger share of reason bestowed upon them.³

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1. 'Status of Women,' The New Encyclopaedia Britannica vol. 19, 15th ed., 1973-74, p. 906
 2. Letters to his Son, London, September 20, 1748, quoted in Frank W. Bradbrook, Jane Austen and her Predecessors, (Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 30
 3. Quoted in David Monaghan, Jane Austen in a Social Context, (New Jersey, 1981), p. 105

The remarks of Lord Chesterfield and Lord Halifax on women are not out of tune with the spirit of the age.

Such being the case, women, in Jane Austen's time, were also treated with discrimination. They were deprived of legal as well as social rights, and needed moral care and protection from men. Reasonable women were naturally displeased with their situation of life in society and had reasons to feel depressed. In her novels, Jane Austen observes women in much closer details than men, and lets us know about their status in society, and of their fears, anxieties and miseries of life as she found these. Brian Southam puts it aptly :

There was another "depression and misery" that she knew intimately, and could command fully and creatively. This was the private, personal history of women like herself, trapped and stifled within the confines of a hothouse society, recognizing its brittleness and artificiality, but with no other world to exist in. These historical issues bear most immediately upon Jane Austen as a woman novelist, presenting an account of society from the woman's point of view -- the woman's experience of men, of other women, of their families, the social circles to which they were confined, and, ultimately, their experience of themselves and of life.¹

Christopher Gillie rightly observes, "Heroines" in Jane Austen

1. 'Jane Austen,' British Writers vol. IV, General Editor Ian Scott-Kilvert, (New York, 1981), p. 105

"find themselves suffering under overlapping disadvantages in four categories : material, family, social and personal. Each category varies in importance from book to book."¹ Jane Austen herself suffered from all these disadvantages in her life. As a writer she feared her society, since in her age writing was not a profession women were encouraged to pursue. Even those writers who came after her, like the Brontes and George Eliot, found it convenient to choose male pseudonyms for their published works. However, Jane Austen understood it well that the publication of her novels in her own name would have inhibited her freedom as an artist. She, therefore, published her works anonymously. Only a few outside of her immediate family could know that she was a novelist. All the members of her family were cautious so that she might remain unnoticed as an authoress. A month before the publication of Sense and Sensibility, one of her favourite nieces "recorded in her diary : 'Letter from Aunt Cass [Cassandra] to beg we would not mention that Aunt Jane wrote Sense and Sensibility.'"² In spite of her anonymity, Park Honan tells us how she was insulted by one of her relations :

On first learning that she was the author of works he had read, her nephew James Edward had sent her a poem with a gross, boyish insult. He was amazed; he said, 'When I heard for the very first time, in my life/That I had the honour to have relation/ Whose works were dispersed through the whole of the nation .../ You might have a good chance of becoming his [Prince Regent's] wife."³

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1. A Preface to Jane Austen, (London, 1974), p. 96
 2. Q. D. Leavis, Op.cit., p. 147
 3. Jane Austen : Her Life, (London, 1987), p. 353

It would not be incorrect to assume that Jane Austen became annoyed at the attitude of the patriarchal society towards women writers. In Persuasion, she speaks of the male domination over literature as a cry from her own heart in the speech of Anne Elliot: "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands" (ch. 23). Not to speak of writing alone, in other honourable professions as well women had no openings. Anne Elliot speaks of the social constraints that determine women's role. She stresses the restricted nature of woman's life as distinct from man's in her conversation with Captain Harville :

We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions. (ch. 23)

Women of Jane Austen's time found their opportunities for self-assertion so severely restricted that the educated women, outside marriage, had no alternative other than putting their intellects up for sale as governesses, or living as old maids. But the profession of governess was arduous, penurious, and little respected. Jane Austen is interested in the governesses from the beginning of her writing career. In her juvenile as well as her major works she is not oblivious of the insecurities of their life. Her governesses are excellent in discharging their duties but are painfully bereft of social status and personal property. In Emma, Miss Taylor has no financial security as a governess; she is not recognized as a

gentlewoman either. Her marriage with Mr Weston earns for her a good status in society, and it becomes a great blessing and security for her. The anxiety and pain of a woman as governess is portrayed much clearly in the character of Jane Fairfax. Jane is superior in abilities to Emma, but she lacks Emma's unearned income. She has been educated to become a governess, for the very few hundred pounds which she possesses would be quite inadequate for her independence. Her economic insecurity forces her to take up the career of a profession that she regards with horror, and that seems to her no less than slavery. Individuals with talent and sensibility like Jane Fairfax were forced into humble social status for economic considerations in the Regency England. G. M. Trevelyan notes that "And the economic condition of single women forced many of them to adopt a trade they abhorred."¹ What Trevelyan tells in terms of history is demonstrated as a fact of life in terms of fiction in Jane Austen.

Jane Austen's male characters are engaged in different professions : they are clergymen, naval or military officers, apothecary, attorney and the like. But her female characters are ladies, who try to be accomplished in music, dancing, some French and a little Italian. Their education is quite shallow and amateurish, not aimed at arousing interests, imparting knowledge, or being put to practical use. The way they are brought up in society makes them dependent on men. And they 'live,' as Anne Elliot designates, "at home, quiet, confined..." In that society, division of labour for men and women

1. English Social History, (Penguin, 1977), p.504

could not provide economic security to women, rather it became the cause of their fear and anxiety. The novelist never fails to depict in her novels the sorrows and distress of the women of her class consequent upon an irrational division of labour.

The prevailing laws were against women making them dependent on men. Before the enactment of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1882, a woman's property would become her husband's at marriage. Thus in Sense and Sensibility, Colonel Brandon's childhood companion Eliza suffers because of this legal system. The girl's 'fortune was large' (ch. 31). But since, after her marriage, the property went into her husband's hand, she did not get money enough to maintain herself after separation. Her insecurities of life took her into the world of sin. Colonel Brandon deplores :

I could not trace her beyond her first seducer, and there was every reason to fear that she had removed from him only to sink deeper in a life of sin. Her legal allowance was not adequate to her fortune, nor sufficient for her comfortable maintenance, and I learnt from my brother that the power of receiving it had been made over some months before to another person. (ch. 31)

The Colonel's brief narration of Eliza's life reveals "The harshness of the world's ethical code, which many parents endorsed, too often drove a girl once seduced to prostitution."¹ Women's condition had become so deplorable that in 1801, in London there were 70,000 prostitutes out of a female population of some 475,000.² Trevelyan

1. G. M. Trevelyan, Op.cit., p. 504

2. Fay Weldon, Letters to Alice on First Reading Jane Austen, (London, 1984), p. 29

remarks that prostitutes "infested the towns with the least public control" and that "'the harlot's cry from street to street' made public resorts hideous at nightfall."¹ In the language of poetry, William Blake, a contemporary of Jane Austen, presents the same picture of the capital in his 'London' in Song of Experience (1794) :

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse [.]

lines 12-16

True, these women came from the poorer sections of the population, or were abandoned wives like Eliza, but they must have felt despair seeing opportunities closed before them. Considering the miserable condition of women, Mary Wollstonecraft in her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) "shows that women, because they are denied political and domestic privileges, have been forced to seek their ends by means of coquetry and cunning."² Indeed, Jane Austen's characters like Lucy Steele in Sense and Sensibility, Isabella Thorpe in Northanger Abbey, and Mrs Clay in Persuasion are all calculating flirts, who suffer from inconstancy and fickleness, seeking to achieve their objectives. Isabella Thorpe and Lucy Steele are girls of negligible fortune; they know it well that they must secure a husband, otherwise they would face a precarious shabby-genteel spinsterhood.

1. G. M. Trevelyan, Op.cit., p. 503

2. 'Mary Wollstonecraft,' The Norton Anthology of English Literature vol. 2, 4th ed., ed. M. H. Abrams, (New York, 1979), p. 110

It is with their art of flattery that they win rich youngmen, and break off the engagements that they voluntarily entered with other young men, earlier. Mrs Clay, who is a widow in her youth, has abilities as well as affection. She is mercenary, and becomes the wife of Mr William by her cunning. Since these young girls suffer from uncertainty they decline morally. Mrs Norris in Mansfield Park emerges as one of the most disagreeable characters in the book, partly because she always considers her economic condition above all other things. "Having married on a narrower income than she had been used to look forward to, she had, from the first, fancied a very strict line of economy necessary" (ch. 1). After her husband's death, due to reduction of income, she practised stricter economy and avoided her responsibility on the plea that "Here am I, a poor desolate widow, deprived of the best of husbands, ... with hardly enough to support me in the rank of a gentlewoman" (ch. 3). Although she frequently professes her benevolence and charity, she prosecutes the schemes at the expense of others, and "betrays her fundamental egocentricity in almost every sentence."¹

Since women did not inherit property from their parents they were "born poor, and stayed poor, and lived well only by their husband's favour."² Naturally, they became very anxious of their future. In Pride and Prejudice, the Bennets' estate is entailed. Since there is no son in the family, the estate will be of Mr Collins after the death of Mr Bennet. This forth-coming misfortune has almost

1. Howard S. Babb, Jane Austen's Novels : The Fabric of Dialogues, (Ohio State University Press, 1962), p. 148

2. Fay Weldon, Op.cit., p. 27

deprived Mrs Bennet of her reason. Sense and Sensibility demonstrates even more clearly than Pride and Prejudice the adverse impact of the law of inheritance on women. The Dashwoods in Sense Sensibility show in practice what Mrs Bennet in Pride and Prejudice apprehends in imagination. In spite of their being members of the same family, John Dashwood, the son, inherits his father's estate and leads a prosperous life; while the daughters -- Elinor and Marianne -- with their mother leave their 'dear' home and go to live in a rented cottage of a distant relation. The reduction of Mrs Dashwood and her daughters from wealth and ease to comparative poverty pulls them down, socially. Their present situation of life provides an opportunity to assess the true character of their relatives and friends.

In Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen, particularly, shows the role of wealth on women in forming their attitude and outlook. Mrs Dashwood and her daughters are not respected as they were before by their relations and friends. They are, now, interested to maintain good relationship with Mrs Jennings with whom Mrs Ferrars and her daughters would not like to associate, in consideration of her husband's getting 'money in a low way' (ch. 33). Since Mrs Dashwood thinks of the future of her marriageable daughters, she persuades them to accept Mrs Jennings' offer of taking them to London in the hope of their own advantages. "I am delighted with the plan," she cried, "it is exactly what I could wish" (ch. 25). Mrs Jennings is a widow with an ample jointure. "She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectively married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world" (ch. 8). She is always

happy, cheerful, and full of jokes and laughter as she enjoys a carefree as well as secure life. Mrs Ferrars is also a widow. But she is 'pseudo-aristocratic' in her attitude and retains a control over all, who come in contact with her. Her large fortune has turned her into a proud and domineering woman. The three widows in the novel make it clear by their different manners and behaviour that money is one of the potent factors in determining social role and in formulating outlook.

Social visits and visits to the houses of relations are essential in a society. A study of her life and letters shows that Jane Austen travelled a great deal to friends and relatives in Bath, London, Kent, and many other places. She often stayed for weeks or months with her brothers in London and Kent. At that time, travel was generally slow and risky. "For young ladies to travel unaccompanied was a high risk,"¹ of which Jane Austen was well aware. She has made use of her own experience of journey in depicting the problems as well as fear of the young girls.

In those days "girls walking alone in the country were liable to insult or robbery."² Naturally, they restricted their movements.

1. F. B. Pinion, A Jane Austen Companion, (London, 1973), p. 27

2. C. Linklater Thomson, Jane Austen : A Survey, (London, 1929), p. 25

In their journies they were likely to encounter many dangers, coming from "the wild young of the upper classes, and free thinkers, who saw sexual freedom as the path of political liberty."¹ The middle-class heroines of Samuel Richardson and those of Fanny Burney "had reasons to fear not only insulting overtures but abduction by aristocratic rakes."² Jane Austen, like these two novelists, lets us know how the rakes abducted young girls. In Northanger Abbey, the first appearance of Captain Tilney does not evoke fear in Catherine Morland as the appearance of a rake could do. His preposterous and grotesque manners show that

He cannot be the instigator of the three villains in horsemen's greatcoats, by whom she will hereafter be forced into a travelling chaise and four, which will drive off with incredible speed. Catherine, meanwhile, undisturbed by presentiments of such an evil, or of any evil at all, except that of having but a short set to dance down, enjoyed her usual happiness with Henry Tilney. (ch. 16)

The mercenary General Tilney's sudden decision of sending Catherine Morland to her village from Northanger Abbey, unattended even by a servant, made her "breathless and speechless" (ch. 28). On the eve of starting her journey, in her chaise she "was too wretched to be fearful" (ch. 29). Catherine travelled about seventy miles and reached home safely. Although "the journey had no terrors for her" (ch. 29), Mr and Mrs Morland felt themselves insulted, as the General forced their daughter to undertake a long and lonely journey

1. Fay Weldon, Op.cit. pp. 28-29

2. Angus Wilson, The World of Charles Dickens, (London, 1970), p. 16

that "might have been productive of much unpleasantness to her" (ch. 29). Anne Elliot in Persuasion, Fanny Price in Mansfield Park, and Elinor and Marianne in Sense and Sensibility, stay for weeks in the houses of their relations and friends without making their journey because of the same fear as the Morlands feel for their daughter. Anne Elliot cannot get away to Bath till Lady Russel provides facilities for her removal; Fanny Price can return only when Edmund Bertram comes to escort her. To avoid unpleasantness, Elinor and Marianne go to Cleveland on their way home.

Solitary driving was unsafe for women even in their own locality. Emma, who is both intelligent and clever and who tries to dominate over the male character, was not considered safe outside her home. At the time of returning from the house of Mr Weston, Emma offered Mr Elton a lift, and had to go to Vicarage-lane. Her return was belated, and it made her father anxious of her fate. When she returned

She was welcomed, with the utmost delight, by her father, who had been trembling for the dangers of a solitary drive from Vicarage-lane -- turning a corner which he could never bear to think of -- and in strange hands -- a mere common coachman -- no James; and there it seemed as if her return only were wanted to make every thing go well. (ch. 15)

Since roads were infested with robbers, rakes, and with other evils, the middle-class young girls in Jane Austen suffer much from the problems of their movements. Their fear and anxieties in this regard have found considerable accounts in her stories.

It is generally admitted that Jane Austen's marriages are

famous -- and so, of course, are her love stories. The means by which her heroines secure husbands for themselves is the primary theme of all six of her novels. Besides the marriages of the heroines, marriages of many other young girls take place in her works. But her stories are not of romantic love, or of lovers. Jane Austen considers that the marriage of the middle-class young girls is full of meaning and consequence, as it is very crucial for them in determining such vital matters as inheritance, status, and financial security. She sees a congenial marriage as a protection for a woman, and accords importance to it. A. O. J. Cockshut is right in viewing that

Marriage, the immemorially traditional theme of comedy, becomes at last as serious and important a thing in literature as it is in life, without ceasing to be delightfully comic. The different purposes of marriage, its complex relation to love, to prudence, to security, to ambition, to social cohesion, provide her with an inexhaustible series of dilemmas, subtle discrimination, and fine shades.¹

Miss Bates, an old maid in Emma, faces a precarious and shabby life with no opportunities and social esteem. She is subject to poverty, and is likely to suffer more in future. Mr Knightley is apprehensive of her future : "She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and if she lives to old age, must probably sink more" (ch. 43). Such a miserable life of the unmarried woman makes Jane Austen's women realize very well, that it is only a

1. The Novel to 1900, ed. James Vinson, (London, 1980), p. 7

prosperous marriage that can guarantee their economic and social security. This is the most acceptable reason, why the girls in her novels are so absorbed in their love affairs, and why their mothers encourage them to fall in love with the rich young men. Fay Weldon remarks aptly :

to marry was a great prize. It was a woman's aim. No wonder Jane Austen's heroines were so absorbed by the matter. It is the stuff of our woman's magazines but it was the stuff of their life, their very existence.¹

That a prosperous marriage raises the dignity of a woman is demonstrated in Mansfield Park. Lady Bertram, on account of her marriage with Sir Thomas Bertram, enjoys honourable social status; while her sisters -- Mrs Norris and Mrs Price -- in consequence of their unprosperous marriage are of little significance in their society. However, Jane Austen's sensible heroines consider their marriage not only in terms of their future husband's wealth and status but also in consideration of their personal satisfaction, and conjugal happiness. They demand due respect from their counterparts. They are not like the heroines of Richardson, who desire nothing more than a marriage ceremony to legalize their sexual and social aspirations. In Pamela, the heroine is fully satisfied with her husband Mr B whom she avoided throughout the novel. But in Jane Austen, the choice of a husband is

bound up in all sorts of actual difficulties; in the heroine's decisions about herself and her future and her adult posture. The first encounters

1. Op.cit., p. 27

with her future husband mark the beginning of the heroine's moral growth, and her marriage is a stage in this growth.¹

The circumstances of Jane Austen's life are helpful for us to understand her attitude towards marriage. Jane Austen, like her sister Cassandra, did not marry; and both sisters lived with their parents and relations. Their life in Bath with a retired clergyman in his seventies must have been rather sedate. And after the death of their father in 1805, they had to maintain the family with a very small income, and would have found it difficult to do so had it not been for the kindness of their brothers. In fact, Jane Austen was at all times in subordinate, dependent circumstances. Her father's death made her realize the importance of a settled domestic atmosphere for a woman. Perhaps, out of this feeling, in 1808, she wrote to Cassandra that "Marriage is a great Improver."² The more old she grew the clearer and better she understood the significance of marriage for the women of her class. In 1817, she wrote to Fanny Knight, her niece, "Single Women have a dreadful propensity for being poor -- which is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony."³ The spirit of this sentiment is almost echoed in the speech of Henry Tilney in Northanger Abbey. "In marriage," he says, "the man is supposed to provide for the support of the woman, the woman to make the home agreeable to the man; he is to purvey and she is to smile" (ch. 10).

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1. Julia Prwitt Brown, Jane Austen's Novels : Social Change and Literary Form, (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 7
 2. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 231
 3. Ibid, p. 483

In view of the socio-economic condition of the England of Jane Austen, marriage for the girls, as is rightly remarked by Leonie Villard, "was a necessity, almost a duty towards themselves and their families."¹ But it became a great problem to get adequate eligible youngmen for the girls. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica notes :

The fact was that during the period of developing capitalism and colonial expansion, eligible young men were becoming scarcer. Many were emigrating overseas, and those who remained were tending to marry at a later age than before, owing to the felt need to "lay a firm financial foundation" before getting up a family. Thus, the fate of unmarriedable, surplus women became a serious topic of discussion in drawing rooms and the press.²

Jane Austen was fully aware of this problem, and in Mansfield Park remarks : "But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world as there are pretty women to deserve them" (ch. 1). And for this reason, "Miss Ward, at the end of half-a-dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr Norris, a friend of his brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, Miss Frances fared yet worse" (ch. 1). In such a 'marriage market,' the arrival of Mr Bingley, a single man of large fortune, in Pride and Prejudice, becomes a topic of warm discussion in the drawing rooms of the neighbourhood. Mrs Bennet, Mrs Long and several other mothers vie with each other to get the rich man as their dear one.

1. Jane Austen, Trans. by Veronica Lucas, (London, 1924), p. 82

2. 'Status of Women,' Vol. 19, 15th ed., 1973-74, p. 910

The girls display their accomplishments to draw his attention. The women of the whole neighbourhood become competitive out of their fear of losing such an opportunity. Similarly, Captain Wentworth in Persuasion is admired and loved by the Miss Musgroves and the Miss Hayters. As for the Miss Musgroves -- Henrietta and Louisa -- they both seemed so entirely occupied by him, "that nothing but the continued appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves could have made it credible that they were not decided rivals" (ch. 8). Evidently, women in Jane Austen become competitive even with their sisters, friends, and neighbours in their quest for eligible men. In her minor work Catherine, Jane Austen records that people sent their daughters to 'East Indies' where they were 'most nobly' married. Her "paternal aunt Philadelphia travelled to India (as did many a young woman) in the hope of acquiring an English husband of means."¹ Jane Austen's observation of society influenced her much in her portrayal of the fear and anxiety of the young girls in getting their husbands.

In her novels there are instances that the moneyless gallants exploit the fear of the young ladies and deceive them by their charm and gallantry. The passionate Lydia Bennet in Pride and Prejudice is panic-stricken about her future even at sixteen, and elopes with Wickham. She is discovered to have run off with a man of no prospect of marriage. Still when the Bennet family succeeds in arranging her marriage she is elated at her triumph over her sisters. Her pleasure is concentrated in hearing herself called 'Mrs ' instead of 'Miss.'

1. F. B. Pinion, Op.cit, p. 9

The fact is that like all others, Lydia thinks that her greatest objective in life has been achieved by her marriage, and so she has reason to express her pleasure. Although deceived, Lydia feels she has been given security by her husband.

Mr Collins is neither sensible nor agreeable, and his society is positively irksome. Elizabeth Bennet rejects his proposal. But Charlotte Lucas who is an intelligent girl, and enjoys the friendship and esteem of Elizabeth accepts this grotesque clergyman as her husband. She has got no love and fascination for Mr Collins, but knows it very well that it is almost her last opportunity to get married. She feels that Elizabeth would be surprised to hear her engagement, and so explains why she has accepted Mr Collins :

You must be surprised, very much surprised -- so lately as Mr Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic, you know; I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr Collins' character, connections and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state. (ch. 22)

Marriage had always been Charlotte Lucas's object, but at 27, she does consider it no more in terms of love and affection, rather thinks it as the "pleasantest preservative from want" (ch. 22). David Daiches is right in observing that she accepts him deliberately weighing her future husband's intolerable character against the security and social position he offers.¹

1. Pride and Prejudice, Sense and Sensibility, (New York, 1950), XV

Emma's views on marriage are quite different from those of Charlotte. Since Emma has a large fortune of £ 30,000, and identifies that the underlying reason for women to marry is financial, within a society where there is little scope for independent employment for women, she has neither desire nor reason to marry. She tells Harriet :

I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing ! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want : I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house, as I am of Hartfield; and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's. (ch. 10)

Jane Austen in her own way believes in economic determinism that she demonstrates in the character of Emma. Emma, in her energetic speech, exemplifies how economy affects a woman's views on life. Since her large fortune is the source of her strength, vigour and energy, she is of opinion that a single woman of good fortune is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else. Like Miss Bates, she has no fear of becoming a poor old maid either.

Jane Austen takes a clear-eyed look at the roles of women and their problems in society. She explores the aspects of their emotion and behaviour most closely associated with the social and

and economic framework that controls their lives so effectively. She believes in the abilities of women, and operates on the assumption that they are inherently as intelligent and rational as men. Her heroines, Fanny Price in Mansfield Park, and Anne Elliot in Persuasion, provide guidance to Edmund Bertram and Captain Wentworth, respectively. Even Darcy in Pride and Prejudice, whom Jane Austen considers intelligent and admires as a person, learns as much from Elizabeth Bennet as she does from him. Undoubtedly, these are indicatives of Jane Austen's belief in female intelligence. In society, the role of her heroines is significant. Their active involvement in the situation in which they find themselves makes them distinctive. Brian Southam appropriately remarks that

For the first time in English literature, outside Shakespeare, we meet heroines who are credible, with minds, with the capacity to think for themselves, with ambition and wit, with an interior life independent of men and the will to challenge them emotionally and intellectually, with the energy to shape their relationships.¹

Jane Austen's contemporaries like Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Holcroft were, in fact, advanced feminists who were demanding a complete reorganisation of society in the interest of women. But Jane Austen keeps herself away from their extreme feminism; nor does she accept what Fanny Burney affirms, namely "the guardianship of social and moral codes as the prerogative of a patriarchal social system to which the aspiring woman must accommodate herself."² All of

1. 'Jane Austen,' British Writers vol. Iv, General ed. Ian Scott Kilvert, (New York, 1981), p. 105

2. Clive T. Probyn, English Fiction of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1782, (London, 1987), p. 175.

Jane Austen's sensible women have respect for traditional values, but at the same time they are aware of their rights, and have courage to protest against the injustices done to them. Though she inherited a common tradition of feminist outlook, it would not be incorrect to say that "Only when the society changes does Jane Austen look for a change in the women's area of activity."¹

In her last novel, Persuasion, Louisa's fall from the Cobb is a crucial factor. It creates panic among all, but Anne Elliot's ability to act authoritatively is helpful in bringing the situation under control. She is the only one able to retain courage and give practical suggestion. Although man is traditionally the figure of action, he fails in this particular case. Anne emerges as a woman of action. Jane Austen believes in the potentiality of her women, and views that given proper education they would be able to prove their efficiency. However, she gives them a role substantial enough for the historical time in which they were living.

Jane Austen's novels are dramatization of different problems faced by her women in general. And in presenting their problems she tells us of their fears, anxieties and sufferings as well. It is interesting to note that although the novelist lived in a male-dominated world, she presents men in a women's world, and sees them as they appear to a woman's eyes. In each of her novels, women occupy the centre of the stage, and she succeeds in giving them a reasonable and honourable social status which no one, in English prose fiction, had been able to do before her.

1. David Monaghan, Jane Austen in a Social Context, (New Jersey, 1981), p. 120

CHAPTER THREE : IDEA OF A HOME

J. David Grey is not right in generalizing that "All of Jane Austen's houses are homes."¹ In Mansfield Park, for example, Fanny Price, one of the sensible characters in the novel, does not accept Portsmouth as a home :

When she [Fanny Price] had been coming to Portsmouth, she had loved to call it her home, had been fond of saying that she was going home; the word had been very dear to her; and so it still was, but it must be applied to Mansfield. That was now the home. Portsmouth was Portsmouth; Mansfield was home. (ch. 45)

Like Portsmouth, Northanger Abbey in Northanger Abbey and Kellynch Hall in Persuasion also cannot be regarded as homes. In these houses there is neither serenity nor regularity of life, the two virtues Jane Austen values much for a home. The selfish members of these houses subvert the desired peace and happiness of a home; and the characters Jane Austen likes feel no attraction for their dwelling places. Obviously, Mr Grey's remark cannot be applied to all of Jane Austen's houses.

In her presentation of houses -- which are the centres of her fictional world -- Jane Austen lets us know what she thinks a home should be like. M. A. Austen - Leigh rightly says,

Whether we examine her writings or her memoirs we are equally led to believe that no one knew better than Jane Austen, both by observation and experience, the meaning of the word 'home' in its fullest and best sense.²

1. 'Houses,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 214

2. Personal Aspects of Jane Austen, (London, 1920), p. 129

It is generally admitted that in each of her works, the novelist takes a few country houses to depict the domestic life of the Regency period. Undoubtedly, this reflects her keen interest in the idea of a home. Her works tell us that a home, to Jane Austen, is the embodiment of traditional values and virtues; and that she does not indiscriminately endorse all of her houses as homes. As it is, Mansfield Park is not a good home. It only becomes a home to Fanny when she comes to Portsmouth and institutes a comparison between the two houses as prospective homes. This discovery Fanny makes in a very personal and rather painful way. However, the differences between these two houses serve to identify some of the features of Jane Austen's conception of a home.

Sir Thomas exiles Fanny to her own family at Portsmouth. Fanny goes there, after a long absence, hoping to experience family love and affection that she always missed at Mansfield. But she is almost stunned to see the poorness of the house and of its members. Her slovenly home increasingly disgusts her, and she realizes that she cannot be happy there. Fanny begins to view with respect the good features of her uncle's house. Portsmouth seems all the worse in view of its very location in a town, where there is neither gardens nor meadows to enjoy the beauties of nature and the pleasure of spring. She is made miserable to live in confinement and in disorder : "She was in the midst of closeness and noise, to have confinement, bad air, bad smells, substituted for liberty, freshness, fragrance and verdure" (ch. 45). All these make Fanny low-spirited and reawaken her to a preference for the house, Mansfield Park, which is in the country, and where there are spacious rooms, large gardens and other physical facilities for the comforts and pleasures of its members.

This reflection of Fanny refutes Charlotte Bronte's famous observation about Jane Austen's houses. Charlotte Bronte calls Jane Austen's houses 'elegant but confined,' giving a description of them :

And what did I find ? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses.¹

Portsmouth is not elegant but confined; while Mansfield is quite the reverse of it. Fanny dislikes her confinement at the former house yearning to go back to the latter one in the hope of enjoying fresh air and other bounteous gifts of nature. Like Mansfield, Jane Austen's other preferred houses, e.g. Pemberley and Barton Cottage, are surrounded by natural beauties. In describing them, she does not speak of 'highly cultivated' gardens but of hills, woods, rivers, and the sky. At Pemberley, Elizabeth surveyed through a window :

The hill, crowned with wood, which they had descended, receiving increased abruptness from the distance, was a beautiful object. Every disposition of the ground was good; and she looked on the whole scene, the river, the trees scattered on its banks and the winding of the valley, as far as she could trace it, with delight. (ch. 43)

1. Letter to G. H. Lewes, Jan. 12, 1848, The Brontes : Their Friendships, Lives and Correspondence vol II, ed. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, (Oxford, 1932), pp. 179-80

In Sense and Sensibility, the Dashwood sisters had been in London rather more than two months, and within this period "Marianne's impatience to be gone increased every day. She sighed for the air, the liberty, the quiet of the country..." (ch. 39). At Barton, she with her sister Elinor enjoyed 'beautiful walks,' 'sunshine of a showery sky' in hills, the blue sky, and the touch in 'their faces the animated gales of an high south-westerly wind' (ch. 9). Descriptions of charming natural beauties are quite common in Jane Austen. The heroines are always in pursuit of novelty and amusement in the celebrated beauties of the land. Anne Elliot in Persuasion goes to Lyme Regis to enjoy the sea beach; Catherine Morland, in Northanger Abbey, walks at Bath to enjoy its 'picaresque' beauty. The characters (though not all) are not confined in their walled houses; rather they prefer to mix with the outer world. They visit different places, attend parties, enjoy balls, making the most of their opportunities. Evidently, the objection raised by Charlotte Bronte is not justified.¹ Her observation is based on a hasty generalization, so very characteristic of the romantic temperament.

In consideration of the ways of life Portsmouth stands in full contrast to Mansfield Park. Portsmouth is a place of noise, disorder and impropriety. Nobody is in his place and nothing is done as it ought to be. The children are all spoilt, and they are all ill-mannered and vulgar. The parents are negligent of their responsibilities. Fanny observes with pain that the habits of her parents are worse, and they are injudiciously indulgent parents who neither taught nor restrained

1. Her objection is applicable to 'Rosings' in Pride and Prejudice. Its beauty is quite artificial. Jane Austen's sensible characters do not feel at home there; and through them, she expresses her own disliking for it.

their children. Their house "was the scene of mismanagement and discomfort from beginning to end" (ch. 39). Since proper homely atmosphere does not prevail at Portsmouth, the breakdown of family relationships is the ultimate consequence. Fanny soon realizes that without discipline and manners family love is almost impossible. In Persuasion, Jane Austen also considers "domestic hurricane a bad restorative of the nerves" (ch. 14), and always abhors and detests it. This detestation is reflected in her portraying of the Uppercross Cottage where, like the young Prices, the riotous boys of Charles Musgroves mar the charm of the home-environment. The Cottage affects Anne Elliot in a similar way to that in which Portsmouth affects Fanny.

Mansfield, on the other hand, is a place of orderliness and of the nice ways. The inhabitants of this house are good in manners and refined in taste. Elegance, propriety, regularity and harmony are the characteristics of the house. Fanny measures Mansfield in terms of Portsmouth, and finds that Mansfield has qualities of a home, and it is better than Portsmouth in almost every consideration. But that does not mean that Mansfield is an ideal home to Jane Austen. Fanny's choice of Mansfield signifies no more than the external charms and the orderliness of this house. It is lacking in many other important characteristics of a home. For examples, the house loses liveliness of a home as the members are not open and free; and the failure of the guardians to teach the young people proper manners and morals produces a crisis in respect of the preservation of values in the family circle. Because of such shortcomings Mansfield fails to retain its charm as a home, and cannot be equal in dignity either to Pemberley

in Pride and Prejudice or to Donwell Abbey in Emma. Jane Austen presents Pemberley and Donwell Abbey above Mansfield as homes, inasmuch as these two houses have, like Mansfield, external charms; and, are, unlike it, able to preserve traditional values and virtues. The people of both houses live in happiness and security. The novelist's idea of a home finds its closest representation in these two houses.

Jane Austen's houses are not merely physical, they are also moral. In Mansfield Park, she makes it clear that physical facilities are needed for a home but these are of secondary importance. Physical facilities become useless if moral values are not properly cultivated. Although houses like Rosings, Sotherton Court, Northanger Abbey are very spacious and magnificent, these are not worthy of consideration as homes. But in contrast, the small-sized house of the Harvilles in Persuasion is a home because it has orderliness as well as virtues, and the members of the family are linked together, producing peace and happiness. The Harvilles are always full of life and spirit in their house. Similarly, the Crofts, in the same novel, are very happy and lively in their rented-house at Kellynch Hall. They turn this house into a home, which the owners of it failed and left for Bath. What Jane Austen suggests is that a secure house is a necessity for domestic happiness, and in the absence of such a home potential or real homelessness would create a great crisis to the lives of the members of a family. This is one of the reasons why the Bennets and the Dashwoods cannot live in peace. They constantly suffer from the want of security in terms of houses. Few novelists have so anxiously asserted the need of a secure house for a home. Apropos of the great houses, Jane Austen shows it quite clearly that their physical faci-

lities will be charming only when there is a correspondence between outward beauty and the inner life. Pemberley does this; and that precisely is the reason why it is a home, whereas some of the great houses are not.

Guidance is a pervasive activity. It is usually afforded to children by their parents and near connections. Through proper guidance parents develop their wards' educational, vocational, and psychological potentialities so that they can achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness. Such being the importance of the role of parents in shaping the destiny of their children, the guardians in Jane Austen are held to a strict accountability for their negligence of duties towards the young boys and girls. To Jane Austen what the guardians do is very important. In her presentation of the houses, she censures the irresponsible parents who fail to create an ideal home - environment on account of their spoilt children. It is significant that seldom if ever we meet satisfactory parents in her works. In three of her novels -- Sense and Sensibility, Emma, and Persuasion -- one parent is dead, and the survivor is inadequate. They are either indulgent, or idle, or irresponsible. Owing to this fact, many children in her novels become ripe for corruption gradually, and pollute the serenity of home-atmosphere. When a house loses its charm and dignity for the activities of the spoilt children, the writer not only blames the children but also indicates with equal care the faults of the guardians. The peace and tranquillity of Longbourn and Mansfield are particularly ruined by the children who have not been brought up with proper attention. As mothers Mrs Bennet and Lady Bertram are over-indulgent. The former is so silly and careless that instead of finding faults with her erring children, she encourages them to display their vulgarity, to the detriment of family status and dignity. Lady Bertram, on the other hand, has nothing more worthwhile to do than to pet her pug and to do needle work. She entrusted her duties of a mother with the mean-minded Mrs Norris, and consequently

had to put up with the elopement of her daughters, and the serious illness of her son, Tom, owing to over-drinking. Jane Austen is very particular in noticing the performance of the mothers, who fail in living up to their responsibilities.

In Persuasion, the novelist emphasizes on the method of treatment in rearing the children up. Mrs Charles Musgrove cannot control her children, whom Anne Elliot can manage quite easily. Mrs Musgrove acknowledges it and says :

Oh ! Miss Anne, I cannot help wishing Mrs Charles had a little of your method with those children. They are quite different creatures with you ! But to be sure, in general, they are so spoilt ! It is pity you cannot put your sister in the way of managing them. They are as fine healthy children as ever were seen, ... but Mrs Charles knows no more how they should be treated -- ! (ch. 6)

Although there are a only few children in her novels, and their role is insignificant as well, we discover here a deep and binding interest, attached to an understanding of child-psychology, a term Jane Austen was of course unacquainted with. She is right in suggesting that mothers should have knowledge on psychology in managing their children; otherwise they (children) will become the cause of an annoyance to everyone, and family peace will be at stake. Mrs Harville is a mother, who knows the proper method of rearing up her children, and can keep her home peaceful.

Jane Austen has not spared the failing fathers, either. She demonstrates the consequence of the negative role of the fathers in

destroying the pleasant home atmosphere. No homely environment prevails in Northanger Abbey owing to the tyranny of General Tilney. The children are always afraid of him. Sir Walter Elliot, though not tyrannical, deprives his daughter, Anne, of her rights. General Tilney and Sir Walter are both undeserving of forgiveness. Their rude and selfish behaviour is the reason why to their children the houses are not at all places of peace and happiness. The fathers like Mr Bennet, Sir Bertram, and Mr Woodhouse fall in another group. As persons they are not unacceptable, but they are negligent of their duties as fathers. Mr Bennet passes his time in the library and does not take care of his children. Sometimes his speech and behaviour is a puzzle and not quite becoming a father. When Jane appears to have been jilted by Bingley, Mr Bennet remarks unfatherly :

So, Lizzy, ... your sister is crossed in love, I find. I congratulate her. Next to being married, a girl likes to be crossed in love a little now and then. It is something to think of, and gives her a sort of distinction among her companions. (ch. 24)

The ultimate result of Mr Bennet's carelessness is disaster in the family, which puts family reputation in danger. However, he grows aware of it at the climax, after Lydia's elopement : "It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it" (ch. 48).

Sir Bertram is an anxious father. He is the most upright and powerful person in the novel; but since his principles are theoretical, he fails to establish intimate relationships with his children, and cannot uncover their deficiencies. His absence is unhappily most welcome to his children. They feel a sense of release when he departs

for Antigua :

They were relieved by it from all restraint; and without aiming at one gratification that would probably have been forbidden by Sir Thomas, they felt themselves immediately at their own disposal, and to have every indulgence within their reach. (ch. 3)

In Sir Bertram's absence Mansfield Park becomes a house quite unfit for the sensible and righteous to live in. When Sir Bertram, not unlike Mr Bennet, becomes aware of his deficient role as a guardian, he takes necessary steps to restore moral order as well as dignity of Mansfield as a home. In Emma, Mr Woodhouse gives his daughter freedom to do whatever she likes. This freedom makes her wilful and snobbish. Her confidence in her own cleverness blinds her to reality, making her insensitive and domineering. She seeks pleasure from manipulating others' lives uninterrupted by her father. Mr Knightley finds faults with her, and his efforts as a guardian rectify her. Emma's example is significant in the sense that although both intelligent and clever, she needs a sensible guardian to lead her along the right path. Mr Knightley corrects her ideas and fancies, and brings her back into her senses helping the young girl to restore order and peace in her own home as well as in others'.

Jane Austen's dignified homes are always provided with admirable guardians. Pemberley and Donwell Abbey, for example, are homes in which Darcy and Knightley are very conscious of their duties. Behind Miss Darcy's sense of duty and propriety, and aesthetic taste there is the all-out care to her given by her brother. Darcy is capable of retaining peace and order of Pemberley by his direct supervision. Wickham, not a friend of Darcy, admits to Elizabeth of Darcy's ability

as a guardian in his own way :

He has also brotherly pride, which, with some brotherly affection, makes him a very kind and careful guardian of his sister, and you will hear him generally cried up as the most attentive and best of brothers. (ch. 16)

Darcy's attention to his sister and to the other people in and around Pemberley makes him adequate as a guardian. Like Darcy, Knightley also takes care of people around him. They treat young people strictly but not without kindness, and seem to be of the view that life being stern need not be faced sternly. In the homes of Jane Austen the guardians are active, and they shield their wards from the evil world outside.

Characters like Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood have been brought up by inadequate guardians, yet they, unlike their sisters, can admirably present themselves everywhere. It is because of their own worth that they think of their home atmosphere more seriously than their guardians do. Jane Austen seems to believe in inherent qualities of such characters of which qualities she is appreciative; but in general she feels the great need of the active role of the guardians in turning a house into a home. She in particular, shows that the young people without their guardians in the places of liberty like London are ruined easily. The novelist disliked London and considered it a place of corruption. She introduces the capital city into her works as a constant threat to country life and also to morality. The majority of the vicious characters, who are either guardianless or are under incompetent guardians, are seen to have fascination for London. The city is a hiding-place for the guilty who do not wish to

be found out. Wickham and Lydia find themselves safe in London after their elopement. Willoughby, the rake lives in London. The Crawfords come from a broken London home, and corrupt by degrees almost all the members of Mansfield Park in the absence of Sir Bertram. They seek to destroy a way of living they envy. Disliking London, and not wishing to dwell on guilt and misery Jane Austen sets most of her houses in the country with which she felt happiest.

E. M. Forster, like Jane Austen, prefers country houses. He demonstrates it in Howards End. Howards End is a country house which is old and small but altogether delightful. It stands for understanding and peace. The owner of the house, Ruth Wilcox recognizes its quality, and enjoys her life there. But the contrast is London "with its sense of flux" :

London was but a foretaste of this nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly, and thrown upon personal relations a stress greater than they have ever borne before.¹

Howards End shows that in the city people are a prey to panic and emptiness. Sane living is possible in the houses like Howards End. An analogy is easy to draw between Jane Austen's idea of a home as well as of London and those in Forster's novel. Forster shares Jane Austen's other conceptions as well. What she wrote about the English middle-class character is endorsed by him. Forster is very particular to view that "the character of the English is essentially

1. Laurence Brander, E. M. Forster : A Critical Study, (London, 1968), p. 152

middle-class," and says that solidity, caution, hypocrisy, etc., are the characteristics of the middle class in England.¹ To illustrate that the members of this class are hypocritical, Forster takes example of Mr and Mrs John Dashwood from Sense and Sensibility, and thus displays his similarity of thought to that of his predecessor.² Forster took her seriously, and her presence can be felt in his works. When he, for instance, begins chapter six of Howards End with the words "We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet," he seems to be echoing the opening chapter of forty-eight of Mansfield Park where she writes :

Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.

Like Jane Austen, he is a relentless moralist; and in his various reviews and essays we can see his admiration for her. Norman Page aptly remarks that "Among early twentieth-century novelists, E. M. Forster displays more clearly than anyone else the persistence of the Austen tradition."³ Forster acknowledges the influence of Jane Austen on him by calling himself 'a Jane Austenite.'⁴

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1. 'Notes on the English Character,' Abinger Harvest, (London, 1965), p. 11
 2. Ibid, pp. 20-22
 3. 'Influence on Later Writers,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 234
 4. Abinger Harvest, Op.cit, p. 172

However, Jane Austen does not fail to notice that there is a new class emerging who live in London, but are good people. The Gardiners live in London and they are wholly estimable not only in their hearts, but also in their manners. In Emma, a London education has not spoilt Jane Fairfax. It has given her accomplishments and elegance. We notice that the Campbells and the John Knightleys are notable for their family affection and good principles, though they live in the metropolis. All these people belong to the professional middle class, and they are not affected by their staying in London.

The home that Jane Austen has in her view needs reciprocal love, understanding and basic respect amongst its inhabitants. David Cecil is right in viewing that :

A man's relation to his wife and children is at least as important a part of his life as his relation to his beliefs and career; and reveals him as fundamentally. Indeed it reveals his moral side more fundamentally. If you want to know about a man's talents you should see him in society; if you want to know about his temper you should see him at home.¹

Jane Austen considers her characters' relation to other members of their family with importance, and observes them both in society and at home. Her characters who are only open, candid and good-

1. Jane Austen, (Cambridge, 1935), p. 23

tempered are able to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with others. She emphasizes that absence of peace and happiness in a home is the cause of the members' inability to develop respect and love for each other. She demonstrates this in the houses like Upper-cross Cottage, Northanger Abbey, and Kellynch Hall. Almost as a contrast, she shows that if the members of a house are equally good, amiable, and sweet-tempered like the Gardiners, the Crofts, and the Harvilles, homely atmosphere is likely to prevail. In Persuasion, Anne Elliot realizes that the Crofts

seemed particularly attached and happy, (Anne could allow no other exception even among the married couples) there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. (ch. 8)

The Crofts' exemplary happy conjugal life has been made possible for their reciprocal love, respect and understanding for each other.

But at Longbourn, the Bennets fail to interact properly and stand apart, because :

Mr Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper. (ch. 1)

Although Mr Bennet is a sensible person, he is usually fatigued with his wife because of her ill manners and 'uncertain temper.' Jane Austen does not approve of the way he puts his wife to shame

in presence of their daughters. Mr Bennet almost deliberately humiliates his wife and widens the gap between them; and thereby he sets up a bad example that inspires his daughters to disoblige their parents and to destroy family reputation. Lydia and Kitty do not learn to respect their elders. Elizabeth Bennet has never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband.

She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum, which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. (ch. 42)

Elizabeth considers her parents' marriage 'unsuitable', and holds them responsible for destroying the peace and happiness of Longbourn as a home. She takes serious things seriously and is careful of the feelings of others. She suffers, as do all of the Bennet girls, from the unhappy marriage of her parents, from their defects, and from their failure to provide a well-ordered and respectable family life. Mrs Bennet has no sympathy for this intelligent girl; on the contrary, she likes her least of all the children. Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy rescues her from this world, and places her in a proper place where, she is quite successful to retain the virtues of Pemberley as a home.

The cause of unhappiness in the Uppercross Cottage in Persuasion lies in the misunderstanding of Mrs Charles Musgrove for her husband.

She always complains against him although he is civil and agreeable. Observing their relationship Anne Elliot could believe that

a more equal match might have greatly improved him; and that a woman of real understanding might have given more consequence to his character, and more usefulness, rationality, and elegance to his habits and pursuits. (ch. 6)

Here, in the observation of Anne Elliot, the novelist speaks of the 'equal match' of a couple as a precondition of achieving mutual understanding in a home. She also hints at the idea that an 'equal match' of 'real understanding' can improve couples in various spheres of life.

The inmates of Jane Austen's home are effective in bringing out agreeable feelings in others, and try to make each other happy. Catherine Morland returns home from Northanger Abbey with a heavy heart, but in her home she is welcomed with such affectionate eagerness that in the embrace of each she finds herself soothed, surrounded, caressed and even happy :

In the joyfulness of family love, everything, for a short time, was subdued; and the pleasure of seeing her, leaving them at first little leisure for calm curiosity, they were all seated round the tea-table, which Mrs Morland had hurried for the comfort of the poor traveller. (ch. 29)

Such warm reception however is accorded neither to Sir Bertram when he returns from Antigua, nor to Fanny Price when she comes back to Portsmouth, nor to Anne Elliot when she goes to meet her father and

sister at Bath. The Elliots are not at all sympathetic to Anne, rather they are fond of Mrs Clay, the daughter of their attorney. Elizabeth Elliot is eager to have Mrs Clay accompany her when she moves for Bath, and tells Anne that "nobody will want her in Bath" (ch. 5). This affront is repeated in Bath, when Elizabeth assures Mrs Clay, within Anne's hearing, that "she is nothing to me, compared with you" (ch. 16). In her presentation of homes, Jane Austen ridicules the irrational as well as sentimental love of the Elliots for the widow, Mrs Clay. She distinguishes love from emotion and sentimentalism. David Cecil is fully justified when he remarks :

Love itself, though she understood its working admirably, did not rouse her enthusiasm unless it was justified by reason, disciplined by self-control. She had little sympathy for romantic imprudence or credulous good nature; she was impatient of people with hearts of gold and heads of wood. And though she was not a slave to worldly consideration she thought it a mistake to overlook them entirely.¹

1. Jane Austen, (Cambridge, 1935), p. 33

Friendly and generous reception and treatment of guests and strangers are important features for a home. Genuine hospitality raises the dignity of a home, and strengthens social relationships as well. In her works, Jane Austen examines the nature of hospitality of different houses to assess these as homes. Northanger Abbey, impressive from the outside though it is, fails in this regard. General Tilney takes Catherine Morland to his house thinking her to be a heiress. But when he learns that the girl has no fortune, he sends her away with disgrace and dishonour. His fake hospitality incurs shame to the house. In Norland Park, Mrs Dashwood and her daughters are badly treated, but they are given friendly reception in Barton Park by Sir John Middleton. Sir Middleton is almost unparalleled in displaying warm hospitality towards his guests. He has become the centre of attraction for different types of people as he is always ready to receive and entertain them. Like Sir Middleton, Darcy, the Palmers, the Harvilles, and a few others show true hospitality towards their guests in their houses. These men and women understand their guests' needs and, which they provide them with care. But in Sotherton Court, Norland Park, Rosings, and Kellynch Hall the masters are quite mechanical in their behaviour and fail to be ideal hosts. They exhibit their own abilities in serving their guests. In the homes Jane Austen likes, people express their liberality of mind and generosity of heart through their hospitality. Darcy's hospitality at Pemberley helps Elizabeth Bennet to measure his character properly, and inspires her to think of him afresh. Since unaffected, warm and obliging hospitality help to establish relationships with the outer world, Jane Austen values this virtue much. She particularly highlights the hospitality of the Harvilles who win the hearts of their guests, and establish good relationships with them by displaying this virtue of their home.

Humour and wit produces delighted laughter, and releases one from tension and inhibition. In Augustan culture, these were valuable faculties, for "letter-writing and conversation were among the arts of the age, signs of its social integration and of common interests widely shared."¹ Jane Austen inherits this Augustan culture, and shows that wit and humour makes a home lively and animated. Characters who possess common agreeableness, with address and conversation pleasing to every sensible person are admired in her novels. In their home-conversation, Mr Bennet, Elizabeth Bennet, the Gardiners, the Crofts and the like enliven their own environment by their shrewd remarks and playful humour. Their flashes of wit make them attractive as well. Howard S. Babb remarks appropriately about the witty dialogues of Jane Austen :

the sheer wit that sparkles in so many of the verbal exchanges is the most memorable feature of her conversations. But they are also distinguished by their lifelike flow But it is at least clear that none of her contemporaries or immediate predecessors among the novelists commands a dialogue at once so fluent and so brilliant as hers.²

The influence of her own home is indeed reflected in the homes she draws. Her mother was a witty woman who "united strong common sense with a lively imagination, and often expressed herself ... with epigrammatic force and point."³ Not only her mother but all other

1. A. R. Humphreys, The Augustan World, (London, 1964), p. 42

2. Jane Austen's Novels : The Fabric of Dialogue, (Ohio State University Press, 1962), p. 242

3. J. E. Austen Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen, (London, 1906), p. 11

members of the family were also notable for their sense of fun and humour. Maggie Lane tells us that

She grew up then in the midst of a large, affectionate family, notable for their sunny natures and their loyalty, their love of books and sense of fun, their sharp intelligence and lively interest in the world about them.¹

Because of a family background that helped her to form her attitude and outlook, Jane Austen enjoys making fun of foolish persons, whom she also pities for their inability to turn their houses into homes. Mr Rushworth in Mansfield Park lives in affluence. Like Mr Darcy, he has an income of £ 10,000 a year, and his house is as large as Pemberley. All these external charms tempted Maria Bertram to think of her marriage with Mr Rushworth. She thought that he would be able to give her the enjoyment of an income larger than her father's, and his 'house in town' would add dignity to her future status. But her meditations on the prospect of her future prosperity is ruined, for her conjugal life with an amiable stupid husband becomes dull and unattractive. Rushworth's foolish manners and inappropriate speeches annoy Maria, and she elopes with the witty Henry Crawford. Wealth is important in Jane Austen's world, but it cannot ensure family peace and happiness unless the owner is intelligent. Mr Collins is a fool and, therefore, Elizabeth Bennet declines his offer. Intelligent girls, like her, do not consider their marriage in terms of security and wealth only. Elizabeth is surprised to hear of the marriage of her friend, Charlotte Lucas, with Mr Collins, and thinks "it was impossible for that friend

1. Jane Austen's England, (London, 1986), p. 37

to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen" (ch. 22). She is right in thinking that although Mr Collins is able to guarantee Charlotte's security, she would not be able to find love and gaiety of a home living with him. Julia Prewitt Brown puts it well :

Charlotte Lucas's life with Mr Collins is not only a "preservative from want" but a preservative from intelligence, gaiety, and love, an embalmed safety from possibility and the requirements of morality and hope.¹

The parsonage at Rosings remains dull and unattractive as a home. On the contrary, the sensible Darcy becomes happy by marrying the intelligent Elizabeth. This couple promises to retain the values and virtues of Pemberley. Their home becomes the home for other members as well : "Pemberley was now Georgiana's home; and the attachment of the sisters was exactly what Darcy had hoped to see" (ch. 61). In Longbourn also Elizabeth tried to keep the house animated and lively entering into conversation with her father. But the family atmosphere is affected by the foolish, silly, and vulgar behaviour of others. Mrs Bennet's conversation and behaviour is consistently indisciplined and inconsiderate. It is dictated exclusively by how she feels, not by how she thinks. Her speeches are not a part of a social exchange; they are effusions without reference to others. Lydia is wholly asocial, never hearing what others have to say. Mrs Bennet and Lydia, in fact, destroy the home-atmosphere of Longbourn. Jane Austen needs witty and intelligent characters like Anne Elliot

1. Jane Austen's Novels : Social Change and Literary Form,
(Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 76

and Captain Wentworth, Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, the Crofts, and the Harvilles for her homes. Since these people are fastidious and discriminating in their speech and behaviour, and are able to display their gaiety and love properly, they can make their homes lively and animated; and retain the charm and serenity of a home.

Culture acquaints us with the best that has been known and thought in the world. One improves culturally by observing and being taught by the members of the family. Jane Austen's homes are rich in culture. To her, it is an internal acquisition of a person as well as an integral part of life. In many of her houses, occasional cultural performances are most welcome. Cultural activities distinguish the sincere from the vulgar in a house. Lionel Trilling aptly comments :

She is the first novelist to represent society, the general culture, as playing a part in the moral life, generating the concepts of 'sincerity' and 'vulgarity' which no earlier time would have understood the meaning of, and which for us are so subtle that they defy definition, and so powerful that none can escape their sovereignty.¹

Cultural events like dancing whether in assemblies, in private balls, or even for impromptu evening entertainment, speak "through the pages of Jane Austen's six finished novels like candles on a Christmas tree."² Dancing enlivens the parties; but she makes use of it

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1. 'Jane Austen and Mansfield Park,' The Pelican Guide to English Literature Vol. 5, ed. Boris Ford, (Penguin, 1975), p. 128
 2. Joan Grisby, 'Dancing, Balls, and Assemblies,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 118

for other purposes as well. For dancing reveals taste, manners as well as family background of those who dance. The socially inferior John Thorpe (in Northanger Abbey) and Mr Collins dance in such a coarse manner that their partners feel no interest in dancing with them; while the dancing of Mr Knightley and Henry Tilney is so inviting that their counterparts get comfort and pleasure while with them. Like dancing, in each of her other cultural events Jane Austen lets us know about the aesthetic taste of the performers, and of the home-influence in forming their outlook in this regard. Wickham is an exception. He is hypocritical in all spheres of his life. As a dancer, he earns the appreciation of all, but makes use of it to exploit others. He has learnt how to dance well because of his association with Pemberley as a son of the steward of the house.

The houses, where young people undertake careful training to acquire the skills in various accomplishments, are appreciated by Jane Austen. But she does not approve of ostentatious display of it. Lady Catherine de Bourgh speaks of a London Master and of valuable musical instruments, but does not give importance to the attainment of the learners. Cultural practice at her Rosings is quite mechanical and superficial. She, in fact, is a pretentious admirer of aesthetic taste. Everybody, at Rosings, admires Elizabeth's easy and unaffected manners of playing, but Lady Catherine praises Miss Bourgh's good taste at her expense :

Miss Bennet would not play at all amiss if she practised more, and could have the advantage of a London Master. She has a very good notion of fingering, though her taste is not equal to Anne's. Anne would have been a delightful performer, had her health allowed her to learn. (ch. 31)

Unlike Anne, the genuine practice of music is carried out by Jane Fairfax and Miss Darcy. They practise constantly and excel in their performances. They add special charm to their houses, and Jane Austen is pleased with them. But she is critical of those, like Mary Bennet, who are mechanical and self-conscious in their performances. Mary can play better than Elizabeth; but since she has neither genius nor taste nor patience, her performance fails to gain artistic excellence. Her conceited manner injures her performance as well. Unlike Mary, Elizabeth's easy and unaffected music is "listened to with much more pleasure" (ch. 6) though she cannot play "half so well."

It is not impossible that cultural events would prove morally injurious. The theatrical performance at Mansfield Park, for example, is significant in this respect. The play Lovers' Vow that is selected represents an elaborate exercise in encouraging vanity and destroying diffidence. The play is shown as a step in Maria Bertram's road to ruin. Jane Austen implies the point that people should be discriminating in selecting materials for recreation; otherwise these would harm the moral strength of a home. She is critical of the theatrical, since it is a sudden desire of a few spoilt young men who do not think of the consequences of their activities. She, in fact, feels the need of principles in all affairs, and admires those who can restrain their impulses in upholding their principles. Laurence Lerner is not unfair in viewing that "What Jane Austen most admired was the ability to resist impulse."¹ The ability to resist impulse is also necessary in performing cultural events.

1. The Truthtellers, (London, 1967), p. 137

In letters as well as in novels, Jane Austen reveals a natural, lively, and informed interest in the subjects of social culture and of fashion. She wants to see all these in practice in a home. Her characters are not prudish or puritanical, they are men and women of the world. Their awareness of the changing fashion and of its elegant use makes them attractive and lively. The novelist's praise is always for elegance in dress, since it adds grace to her homes. She very often writes of her characters' dress and of their taste for it. We meet Elizabeth Bennet for the first time when she is "employed in trimming a hat" that she wishes to use in the next assembly (ch. 2). Mrs Gardiner's business on her arrival at Longbourn is to distribute her presents and describe the newest fashions. But when fashion gets importance above everything else, Jane Austen becomes critical of it, and presents it humorously. Thus in Northanger Abbey, Mrs Allen, who has "neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner," only talks of fashion and gets delight in it. She spends so much time in dressing that she, at Bath, "did not enter the ballroom till late." She takes "three or four days" to learn what is "mostly worn" at Bath, and to buy the "newest fashion." In fact, "Dress was her passion" (ch. 2), and the novelist makes fun of it. Like Mrs Allen, Mrs Bennet and Lydia are much interested in their fashion; and the way Jane Austen narrates it makes us enjoy their showy display of dress and fashion. It would not be inappropriate to note that during Jane Austen's lifetime "fashions went to extremes" and "were satirized in cartoons and in fiction."¹

1. Brian Wilks, Jane Austen, (Hamlyn, 1978), p. 50

Although the novelist is the daughter of a clergyman and spent a long period of her life in Steventon parsonage, she has no comments to make in her novels on the beauty of a church or cathedral. But she is particularly prone to display her taste for art and architecture, and also interest in houses and their interiors. Art makes her home graceful and attractive; it is the source of great enjoyment as well. Both fine and useful arts as well as architectural beauty and natural surroundings are frequently displayed in the presentation of her homes.

In her houses useful art, like furniture, has both aesthetic and utilitarian dimensions. Jane Austen often in her authorial comments remarks about the furniture of the houses, and lets us know how it enhances the grace of a home, and at the same time reveals the taste of the inhabitants. The proper arrangement of the furniture in a house is important to her sensible characters. Mrs Dashwood's furniture in Sense and Sensibility "was all sent round by water" to Barton Cottage. "It chiefly consisted of household linen, plate, china, and books, with an handsome pianoforte of Marianne's" (ch. 5). At the cottage the mother with her daughters becomes

busy in arranging their particular concerns, and endeavouring, by placing around them their books and other possessions, to form themselves a home. Marianne's pianoforte was unpacked and properly disposed of; and Elinor's drawings were affixed to the walls of their sitting-room. (ch. 6)

It is because of their artistic enterprise that the poor cottage turns into a pleasant home.

We are made aware of the Darcys' taste for beauty and art when we see Pemberley and its furniture. Elizabeth Bennet felt that the man who had inherited elegant beauty, and cared for it, could not be a bad man. Pleased to find herself in the house, where display of art and architecture is attractive, Elizabeth begins to see Darcy in a new light. She compares the furniture of Pemberley to that of Rosings :

The rooms were lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor; but Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine; with less of splendour, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings. (ch. 43)

Like Pemberley, the other preferred houses of Jane Austen capture the attention of the strangers for their art and beauty. Captain Harville's house at Cobb is very small; but Anne Elliot is fascinated to see the nice arrangements of their excellent furniture. Jane Austen presents the Captain's taste and ardour for art warmly :

The varieties in the fitting up of the rooms, where the common necessities provided by the owner, in the common indifferent plight, were contrasted with some few articles of a rare species of wood, excellently worked up, and with something curious and valuable from all the distant countries Captain Harville had visited, were more than amusing to Anne: connected as it all was with his profession, the fruit of its labours, the effect of its influence on his habits, the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented, made it to her a something more, or less, than gratification.

Captain Harville was no reader; but he had excellent accommodations, and fashioned very pretty shelves, for a tolerable collection of well-bound volumes, the property of Captain Benwick. (ch. 11)

What the novelist suggests explicitly is that the small houses of the middle class can also be turned into pleasant homes of the kind Pemberley is if the inhabitants have aesthetic taste in them.

Great houses like Rosings, Northanger Abbey, and Sotherton Court are places which, despite their display of luxury, fail to reflect aesthetic interest of their owners. The owners think of the improvement of their houses, but their 'improvement' does not bear testimony to their taste for art and beauty. Jane Austen is incisively critical of their artless improvement. Brian Southam is right in remarking that

Throughout the novels Jane Austen plays deftly with the terminology of improvement, carrying its negative overtones of novelty, showiness, and superficiality into the realm of manners, behaviour, and morality. Improvement can be a facade, a veneer.¹

The dazzling display of these great houses does not impress the novelist. The readers also share the opinions of the sensible heroines, who visit these houses and do not like them at all. Jane Austen did not allow herself to be carried away by the grandeur of these mansions. She, in fact, presents the art and architectural features of her houses to reveal their possessors' aesthetic sense. Nigel Nicolson is right and to the point when he says that Jane Austen made use of landscape and architecture "to manoeuvre her

1. 'Jane Austen,' British Writers vol. IV, Gen. ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert, (New York, 1981), p. 103

fictional people and reveal their characters."¹

Minor useful art though furniture may be, it is the symbol of tradition no doubt. And hence Jane Austen's characters are aware of the importance of their furniture. In spite of their small income the Dashwoods take the trouble of carrying their furniture from Norland Park to Barton Cottage to decorate their new house. Mrs John Dashwood "saw the packages depart with a sigh" (ch. 5). What Jane Austen's characters feel about their home and furniture is different from what Birkin feels about them in D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love. For example, Birkin says to Ursula in a second hand furniture shop, "The truth is, we don't want things at all," and adds "The thought of a house and furniture of my own is hateful to me" (ch. 26). He wants to live anywhere : "One should just live anywhere -- not have a definite place. I don't want a definite place" (ch. 26). Because of such attitude and outlook, it is possible for them to abandon the beautiful old chair that they decided to buy for its beauty. In Jane Austen nobody disregards the importance of a home and its furniture, as Birkin and Ursula do. Jane Austen and D. H. Lawrence are as apart from one another as two great novelists could possible be.

Apart from the display of useful art, she deals with fine art as well. Visual art like paintings, auditory art like music, and verbal art like recitation are among the fine arts she makes use of in her novels. The novelist not only presents the performances of her characters but also passes critical judgements as a great connoisseur

1. 'Jane Austen's Houses in Fact and Fiction,' Persuasions, (The Jane Austen Society of North America, 1992), Issue no. 14, p. 92

in matters of their taste for art. Like useful art, fine art also increases the grace and dignity of her homes.

Jane Austen believed in the library which is an instrument of civilization. It provides the union of understanding that links the generations, makes it possible to share human experience of all ages. Since a library is an organized collection of books and other informational materials, the novelist, in Nortanger Abbey, terms it as a "storehouse of knowledge" (ch. 23). A library is an indispensable element in the homes she prefers. It helps persons to acquire self-education, and provides them with knowledge needed for cultural growth. A library in her homes gives opportunity for a harmless and elevating use of leisure. She believes that the proper use of a library in a home is helpful to create a good home environment. It is known that at Steventon, the Austens had an excellent library of about 500 books.¹ Jane Austen had read widely enough to realize the importance of such an institution in each home.

In Persuasion, Anne Elliot seems to be speaking on behalf of the novelist in giving a reading list. Anne tells Captain Benwick to read :

a large allowance of prose in his daily study, and on being requested to particularise, mentioned such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances. (ch. 11)

1. Maggie Lane, Jane Austen's England, (London, 1986), p. 37

In Jane Austen's view there are definite objectives of studies, and therefore she recommends only those books which will 'rouse and fortify' the mind. Since novel as a genre, in her time, did not flourish and was mediocre in standard as well as uncertain of its aim, she does not include any novel in the list.

A library to Jane Austen is more than a possession, it is something to be made proper use of. To her way of thinking, mere reading cannot make one worthy unless one learns how to analyse, examine, and accept the teaching of a book. Mary Bennet is a serious reader, but she is no more than a pedant. Mr Bennet, on the other hand, is an escapist. He takes his library as a place where he can be free from family responsibilities. Whenever he feels uneasy or is in troubles, he chooses to pass his time in library as "In his library he had been always sure of leisure and tranquillity" (ch. 15). The novelist does not approve of such a use of a library. She neither approves of reading the Gothic novels. Gothic novels became popular through circulating libraries and affected the readers. Her characters Isabella Thorpe and Catherine Morland, the readers of these books, destroy their ability to distinguish between literature and trash. Since the circulating library is not adequate to meet the proper needs of her characters, Jane Austen only mentions it in Mansfield Park and in Northanger Abbey. But family libraries appear most frequently almost in all of her novels, though they are not equally efficacious to the members of a family. The Bennets have already been cited in this regard. The library at Northanger Abbey exhibits "a collection of books, on which an humble man might have looked with pride" (ch. 23). General Tilney cannot develop liberal

faculties by the use of such a library, but Henry Tilney, his son, can do. Of all the libraries mentioned in her works, Jane Austen considers Pemberley's library the best showing Darcy's care for both studies and books. Darcy's conversation with Miss Bingley reflects his notion of a library in a home :

"I am astonished" said Miss Bingley, "that my father should have left so small a collection of books. What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr Darcy !"

"It ought to be good," he replied, "it has been the work of many generations."

"And then you have added so much to it yourself, you are always buying books."

"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these." (ch. 8)

In the last sentence, Darcy's reflection is, perhaps, on the follies and foibles as well as on the immoral activities (like elopement) of the young people of his time. Living in an adverse situation that hinders the cultivation of moral faculties, Darcy feels that the family library should not be neglected. Perhaps, he is also thinking of the failure of educational institutions to give proper education to young persons. There is no doubt that Jane Austen endorses Darcy's idea of his family library. In her presentation of the libraries, she views that the proper use of these is essential not only for acquiring knowledge but also for preserving an ideal home environment.

Jane Austen's novels are about both manners and morals. She stresses the need of these two virtues in the making of a pleasant home. Since manners and morals are complementary, she desires to see these coalesce in each of her characters. Ill-mannered and immoral characters, in her novels, affect the home atmosphere. She expects socially acceptable manners and behaviour from the characters she likes. Manners may display a superficial veneer of polite behaviour, and therefore, there is scope of deceiving others with these. Mr Knightley employs his manners to demonstrate his awareness of the needs of others, but John Dashwood and General Tilney are polite only when it serves their purpose; while Frank Churchill hides his real intentions behind a screen of good manners. Churchill, Wickham, Willoughby, the Crawfords, William Walter Elliot are all pleasant, easy and unaffected in their manners, but they are all deficient in morals, and affect the houses they come in contact with. Their impressive behaviour serve only to cover up their depravity. When their loose morality is exposed they become the objects of hatred of all. To Jane Austen, morals are of greater importance than manners. She is uncompromising with those who are good in manners but bad in morality. But she is sympathetic with those who are not agreeable in their manners but good in their principles and morality. Darcy, is a case in point. Despite his supercilious behaviour, he is held up because of his high principles and morality. Of course, it is true that Darcy changes his manners. Tony Tanner is right in remarking that "Jane Austen composed a novel in which the most important events are the fact that a man [Darcy] changes his manners and a young lady [Elizabeth] changes her mind."¹ Darcy's

1. Jane Austen, (London, 1986), p. 103

change in manners makes him suitable for a home, Jane Austen likes.

Home environment is morally efficacious. The Crawfords despite their vitality, wit, charms, accomplishments and many other good qualities, cannot learn moral teachings properly because they are brought up in an immoral atmosphere. The environment of Mansfield Park is contaminated with their vices, and the young Bertrams ruin their happiness. Jane Austen suggests that the moral environment of a home should be protected from the threats of the outer world. Angus Wilson remarks that in all her novels excepting Northanger Abbey the middle-class or gentry homes are "invaded" by the rakes who come from the outer world and destroy the moral atmosphere of the country houses.¹ The novelist wants that such 'invasions' of the rakes should not happen. She approves of punishment meted out for the violation of established moral codes as well. Lydia Bennet in Pride and Prejudice and Maria Bertram in Mansfield Park are shunned for their elopements. Since their example is contaminating, Kitty is not allowed to visit Lydia; Maria is exiled to a foreign country. In the hope of making a peaceful home, Jane Austen's heroines marry young men of good principles and character, remaining impervious to the temptation and pressure of the wealthy bad people. They do not surrender while their suitors' question of morality is tested.

In personal life as well, Jane Austen valued the character of the young men above all. In one of her letters she wrote to Fanny

1. 'Evil in the English Novel,' Kenyon Review, March, 1967, pp. 169-70

Knight, her niece, about a youngman of character, recommending him eligible for her spouse :

His situation in life, family, friends, and above all, his character -- his uncommonly amiable mind, strict principles, just notions, good habits -- all that you know so well how to value, All that really is of the first importance -- everything of this nature pleads his cause most strongly.¹

Both in novels and letters, Jane Austen always speaks as a moralist. Gilbert Ryles terms her as "a moralist in a thick sense."² Indeed, in her moral world, she expects everyone to be sincere, unselfish, and active. Her idea of a home is based on such moral foundation.

Economy is one of the most important foundations for Jane Austen's homes. She, in her own way, considers the role of economic determinism in the making of a home. But it seems that great wealth and high social status, in her view, are not necessary or even conducive to happiness. Had she considered economy the only foundation of her homes, Mansfield Park, Northanger Abbey, Sotherton Court and the like would have been the best of the houses. The people of these great houses enjoy some economic advantages in their everyday life, but money cannot ensure them happiness. Most members of these great houses are lacking in moral foundation, since they were not taught principles that would enable them to follow what is right. On the

1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 409

2. 'Jane Austen and the Moralism,' Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1968), p. 106

other hand, since money and property is no less important than other factors no one, in Jane Austen, can be a hero without it. It is not unnatural for the moneyless young people to act indiscriminately; and thereby they fail to acquire the qualities of a hero. But those who have strong sense of morality can live honestly despite their hardship. Fanny Price, Miss Bates, and Jane Fairfax are poor but they are honest, and have a moral standing superior to many of the rich characters. But it is not to be expected that people suffering from penury should always be honest. Jane Austen is thoroughly practical as economy is concerned. She admits that a modest income is necessary for the preservation of moral worth as well as family happiness. But she rebukes the craving for anything more than a sufficiency. She distinctly protests against mercenary marriage in which love and morality are overlooked. What Jane Austen makes clear about money and morality is that after a certain standard of economic solvency has been achieved, the most important task is to develop the moral worth of a character; nevertheless she always expects the characters she likes to be moral, irrespective of their economic condition.

It is to be noted that wise and proper use of wealth is also important in Jane Austen's home. Kellynch Hall breaks down as a home because of many reasons of which Sir Walter's extravagance is the most adverse one. While Lady Elliot lived

there had been method, moderation, and economy which had just kept him within his income; but with her had died all such right-mindedness, and from that period he had been constantly exceeding it. (Persuasion, ch. 1)

Consequently, Sir Walter ran into heavy debt, and it forced him to mortgage part of his estate. Finally, he leaves his own house for Bath to live in a rented-house there.

Jane Austen is very ardent in her presentation of the theme of a home. She brings into sharp focus almost all the characteristics of what she considers to be an ideal home. In fact, she reflects her experience of life as well as her observation of different houses in her works. Her love for the home at Steventon was so deep that when she was told in 1801 that the family would leave for Bath, she fainted for the first time in her life.¹ She valued the importance of a home in the highest degree. Memoirs and Biographies² note that during the first twenty-five (1775-1800) years of her life, she lived in the midst of a lively and affectionate family, with occasional visits to Bath, London, and her brothers' houses. She also visited the houses of her kinsmen. During her visits, she had time as well as opportunity to mix in, and observe, the modes and manners of different houses; and could compare those with the corresponding houses she already knew well. In all her novels she uses the visit to move her heroines into different houses, which houses are then compared and contrasted. Rosings and Pemberley, for examples, "provide Elizabeth Bennet with two very distinct models of aristocratic behaviour and values."³ In the last decade of the eighteenth century, Jane Austen wrote three novels (although these were substantially revised after 1809) living

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1. Elfrida Vipont, A Little Bit of Ivory, (London, 1977), p. 83
 2. a. J. E. Austen-Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen, (London, 1906)
 b. M. A. Austen Leigh, Personal Aspects of Jane Austen, (London, 1920)
 c. Goldwin Smith, Life of Jane Austen, (London, n.d.)
 d. Constance Hill, Jane Austen : Her Homes & Her Friends, (London, 1923)
 3. David Monaghan, Jane Austen, Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), p. 12

at her happy and cheerful home at Steventon. Since her early years were 'bright and happy,' 'pleasant and prosperous' amongst the members of her family, the short-comings of other houses became sources of absorbing interest to her; and she delineated these in her novels. Constance Hill rightly says : "we see the influence of her happy home in the unconscious charm of the domestic atmosphere of her stories and the delicate sub-satirical humour which pervades them."¹

It is, of course, not without significance that there is close correspondence between Jane Austen's loss of a happy home and her loss of vigour and strength for writing when her family moved to Bath. From 1801 to 1809, she could write nothing remarkable. She tried to write The Watsons but failed to complete it. The view that Jane Austen's failure to complete The Watsons can be explained by the death of her father and the consequence of unsettlement in her life is not unacceptable.² In 1805, George Austen died. His widow and daughters were left in straitened circumstances, and they were rendered homeless as well. They "went into lodgings for a few months, and then removed to Southampton,"³ where they shared a house with Captain Francis. Insecure lodgings and unsettlement in her life made her realize more deeply, than before, the importance of a home in the life of a man. She could resume her writing only after her settlement at Chawton which may be called the second as well as her last home. During the temporary residences at Bath and Southampton she

1. Jane Austen : Her Homes and Her Friends, (London, 1923), p. 83

2. F. B. Pinion, A Jane Austen Companion, (London, 1973), p. 15

3. J. E. Austen Leigh, A Memoir of Jane Austen, (London, 1906), p. 68

was only a sojourner in a strange land; but at Chawton she found a real home amongst her own people.¹ After 1809, Jane Austen revised her first three novels and wrote three more. This could, again, be explained with references to her settlement in a new, congenial home atmosphere. In her later works, she is even more explicit in respect of a home. Her biographers are right in suggesting that her kinsmen and their houses might have served as the prototypes of many of her characters and houses, respectively.²

During the period of Jane Austen, Industrial Revolution and Napoleonic Wars brought changes in the life (particularly city-life) of England. The traditional values and virtues were being replaced by new values and order. People tended to become materialistic and cold hearted. To them, like the Crawfords in Mansfield Park, money played a central part in their system of values. Since Jane Austen preferred a world of fixed values, she introduced vices of city-houses

1. Ibid. p. 79

2. Constance Hill (Op.cit.), p. 86) speaks of her visitings at Goodnestone, the father-in-law's house of her brother, Edward Knight, and poses the question : "And did Goodnestone, or some other fine property, suggest the future 'Rosings,' the residence of the dignified Lady Catherine de Bourgh ?" Similarly, Goldwin Smith (Op.cit., p. 17) remarks : "She also visited her kinsman, Mr Knight, at Godmersham Park; and perhaps it was there, more than at Steventon that she studied the life of the country magnate, the Sir Thomas Bertram of Mansfield Park." Nigel Nicolson in 'Jane Austen's Houses in Fact and Fiction,' Persuasion. (JASNA, 1992), p. 93 says :

But of all the many houses she knew there is one which predominantly influenced her attitude. That is Godmersham in Kent, where she spent many of her happiest days with her brother Edward, and wrote (we can legitimately surmise) many of her most sparkling passages. It is also one of those houses that survive to remind us of the beauty of England that she inherited and transmitted to us with such faultless grace.

as a constant threat to country values. The Crawfords pollute the country atmosphere at Mansfield Park. Being settled at Bath, Elizabeth Elliot in Persuasion defies country hospitality as an old-fashioned custom :

Old fashioned notions -- country hospitality -- we do not profess to give dinners -- few people in Bath do -- ... I will ask them [The Musgroves] all for an evening; that will be much better -- that will be a novelty and a treat. (ch. 22)

Conflict of values¹ of her time, and her years of life in uncertainties of lodgings in Bath and Southampton might have developed in her the idea of a home that she has presented in her novels. She idealizes her homes as moral worlds, where the ceremonies² of life as well as the traditional values and virtues are observed. W. B. Yeats, the poet, likes a house of the type suggested by Jane Austen, and prays for such an one for his daughter in 'A Prayer for My Daughter' :

"And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
where all's accustomed, ceremonious;"

and

"How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born ?"

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1. "Miss Austen was caught between two worlds -- the stable, traditional one of her birth in 1775 at Steventon Rectory, and the New Age which she encountered when growing up ..." Q. D. Leavis, Collected Essays Vol. I, ed. G. Singh, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 149
 2. David Monaghan in his Jane Austen : Structure and Social Vision, (London, 1980), examines elaborately the importance of 'the ceremonies of life' in her works.

Reading her, one feels tempted to ask the question whether her idea of a home had anything to do with 'dear' Johnson's. For Johnson believed that

nothing in English had been more read, and spoke of it as 'a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations.' This 'system' includes a modest house, near town yet in the country, a garden, a cool stream, and a grave surveyed from a 'silent study' furnished with the classics and such moderns as are

Men of steady Sense,
Esteem'd for learning, and for Eloquence.

A moderate estate supports it, providing hospitality to friends and charity to the poor, 'a little Vault' of wine to whet the wit, companions 'in Reas'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate and Just,' an intelligent lady, Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all' and at last 'a silent and a peaceful death.'¹

Johnson speaks of 'the system of life' in the house of the landed class only. But Jane Austen speaks of the houses of several classes, particularly highlighting those of the gentry and the professional middle class. Her houses seem natural because they are seen in the real world; but most of these fail to turn into ideal homes as it is very difficult for their inhabitants to acquire all the qualities a home would require them to do.

1. A. R. Humphreys, The Augustan World, (London, 1964), pp. 3-4

CHAPTER FOUR : IDEA OF EDUCATION

Education -- which has always been recognised as the means of self-development, of improving the cultural heritage, and of preparing the youth for adult responsibilities -- has been acquired and given in different ways at different times. Although in Europe the eighteenth century is especially marked as a century for education,¹ education offered in England was not at all satisfactory owing to the faults in educational institutions as well as in the system itself. Trevelyan quotes from Marvin's Century of Hope to show the deplorable condition of the secondary education of that period :

'It has been estimated,' writes an eminent educational expert of our day, 'that the condition of our "public" or higher schools was worse between 1750 and 1840 than at any time since King Alfred. The grammar schools were largely derelict, often scandalous. The endowments of the secondary schools were to a large extent embezzled by absentee masters, imitative of the example set them by the official class in other spheres of Church and State.'²

Female education was restricted. Girls and their education were much less thought of than boys and their education. Mary Wollstonecroft called this heterogeneous system of education a "false system of education,"³ and designated it as opposed to the flourishing of women's potentialities as human beings. She justly considered proper education for women one of the greatest factors to make them 'human

1. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 6, 15th ed., 1976, p. 348

2. British History in the Nineteenth Century and After : 1782-1919, (Penguin, 1968), p. 43

3. 'Mary Wollstonecraft,' The Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. 2, 4th ed., ed. M. H. Abrams, (New York, 1979), p. 112

creatures,' and suggested, "if love be the supreme good, let women be only educated to inspire it, and let every charm be polished to intoxicate the senses."¹ Jane Austen was also dissatisfied with the prevailing system of education, and took particular note of it. In fact, education is a recurring thought in her works. In all her novels and in many of her minor works, she is very much concerned with the education of her characters. D. D. Devlin is right in thinking that "It is the imprudencies and education of her heroines that chiefly interest us; but other people, too, in her stories undergo the discomforts of a true education."²

Jane Austen mainly concerns herself with the education of the gentry and the professional classes. People of these classes were, undoubtedly, the majority of the educated population of her day. But she has also dealt with the education of the aristocracy (through Fitzwilliam Darcy, Georgiana Darcy, and Miss De Bourgh) to compare and contrast the modes of education of the middle class in relation to them. To her, education is the rational criterion to judge a character whether he or she is of 'ill breeding' or of 'good breeding.' Brigid Brophy aptly remarks :

She ... arrived at her moral concept of 'good breeding,' where the literal breeding-stock is no longer all important. Elizabeth Bennet can be better bred than her younger sisters, though all are of the same middle-class family, and Darcy better bred than Lady Catherine though both are of the same aristocratic family.³

1. Ibid, p. 137

2. Jane Austen and Education, (London, 1975), p. 1

3. 'Jane Austen and the Stuarts,' Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1968), p. 34

Lady Catherine is literally 'better bred,' but her attitude towards the people of her lower station is so rude and unpleasant that at Rosings "Darcy looked a little ashamed of his aunt's ill breeding," (ch. 31) while she was talking irrationally about her visitors -- Elizabeth Bennet and Mrs Collins. However, Jane Austen is quite aware that no one irrespective of class background can have automatic education. It is to be acquired in a congenial atmosphere. She has most explicitly suggested various important factors which are essential for the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society to the new generation. The role of the guardians, teachers, environment, educational equipment, etc., are important to her. In assessing the value of these factors she was greatly influenced by Locke's work on education, namely, Some Thoughts Concerning Education. D. D. Devlin says, "she had certainly read John Locke, and it is Locke, the most important writer on education in the eighteenth century, who can throw some light on the idea of education in her novels."¹ Locke's concern, in his book, is with the education of gentlemen, and Jane Austen's works amount to a demonstration of his ideas in the novel form.

Characters like Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, and Captain Wentworth go through a process of learning that involves the acquisition of self-knowledge, and the ability to regulate their behaviour, and to judge others. So long as they remain inadequate in understanding themselves and their world in which they

1. Op.cit, p. 7

live, their process of education continues. Not only the young but also the elderly (e.g. Mr Bennet, Sir Thomas Bertram) learn where they are deficient, and become aware of their responsibilities. Obviously, Jane Austen sees education as a life-long process through which her characters acquire a new insight and become better people. She assumes that education is all-powerful in forming outlook of her characters. Her satire is directed at those failures of education and judgement which make daily life painful. The errors, follies and sins, as she points out, are substantially the result of flawed upbringing and failed education. For example, in Pride and Prejudice, she "holds the differences in the Bennet sisters' education ... accountable for the difference in their moral characters. Not without purpose does she consistently put bad grammar into Lydia's mouth and letters."¹ Elizabeth is a conscious reader; while Lydia is not. The latter's life is full of follies and sins. She speaks and writes as she wishes. After her elopement she writes "I am going to Gretna Green, and if you cannot guess with who ..." (ch. 47) (underlining mine). Elizabeth's letters are, on the other hand, not only grammatically correct but also rationally developed. Like Lydia, the characters who fail to acquire proper education harm the moral atmosphere bringing misery to themselves as well as to those around them.

Her novels clearly demonstrate that she is a believer in comprehensive education. Tom and Miss Bertram, in Mansfield Park, have adequate knowledge about geography and history of which Fanny Price

1. Brigid Brophy, 'Jane Austen and the Stuarts,' Op.cit., p. 34

is quite ignorant. Fanny is mocked at for her lack of education. But in course of time, she, by virtue of her natural and moral intelligence, acquires rudimentary education as well as proper manners, and turns out to be the 'teacher' of the young Bertrams. The novelist prefers Fanny's education, and views that mere bookish learning or knowledge associated with pedagogic curriculum is no guarantee for young people's proper upbringing, unless they are made morally aware of their situation of life, or of the need for proper manners, behaviour, taste and temper. Juliet McMaster is apt and to the point when she remarks :

For Jane Austen education involves much more than the mere gathering of information. Like John Locke, she considered that a system of education should address the whole person and be a moral as well as an intellectual training.¹

Because of her comprehensive sense of education, moral education, in fact, becomes a major issue. The young Bertrams, well-informed on the Roman emperors though they are, are deficient in the common acquirements of generosity and humility, and of moral sense. Their father realizes that he has made a "direful mistake in his plan of education," since "they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers by that sense of duty which can alone suffice" (ch. 48). Darcy also regrets that his moral education was only partial :

1. 'Education,' The Jane Austen Handbook, ed. J. David Grey, (London, 1986), p. 141

I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child, I was taught what was right; but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. (ch. 58)

Darcy has to learn how to correct his temper from Elizabeth. Similarly, Emma's education was also faulty, which faults she was able to mend through the instruction she received from Mr Knightley. In fact, her education is an example of moral growth through sufferings.

Wickham, Willoughby, and Mr Elliot fail to acquire a comprehensive kind of education, and their failure leads them to the wrong path. Although they have pleasing manners and appearance, they lack moral goodness, strength and stability. Jane Austen determines the standard of education of her characters by the test of intelligence, good sense and developed taste. She desires to see external manifestation of these qualities in their daily life. In this sense, Henry Tilney, Edmund Bertram, and Mr Knightley are truly educated. They are eligible enough to form the principles of the heroines, whom they come to love in the process of togetherness.

The novelist strongly supports the view that natural intelligence is by far the most important faculty of a character in respect of the acquisition of comprehensive education. But, at the same time, she is of opinion that natural sweet disposition needs to be nurtured. Should a person's natural intelligence be properly cultivated he would be able to feel and understand correctly to develop sound taste

and judgement in all aesthetic matters. His intelligence would make him learn the proper speech-habit which is an integral part of Jane Austen's preferred characters' education. Laura G. Mooneyham makes an important point about the heroines of Jane Austen when she says :

The most productive way to trace the progress of a heroine's education is to follow her changing habits of speech.

Their educations require only that their use of language be honed; a revolution of words is never required.¹

Heroines like Fanny Price and Catherine Morland, who have natural intelligence but come of poor family background, do not know the proper way of speaking when they are first introduced to us. But in their process of education, they change their habits of speech quite admirably. Even Elizabeth Bennet has to learn how to correct her speech-habit to complete her self-education. Although the change of speech-habit is very common in Jane Austen's novels, those who are foolish never learn to speak properly. Mr Collins, for example, is a constant butt of the fun of the novelist for his insufferable mode of speaking. Since Mr Collins's education has been limited to a particular area, he fails to be liberal in his outlook. His world is narrow, his vision narrower. He cannot come out from his fixed realm; and judges everything by his narrow perspectives formed by his education. Jane Austen does not approve of such education that

1. Romance, Language and Education in Jane Austen's Novels, (London, 1988), X

cannot help one to liberate oneself from narrowness, and fails to make one liberal as well as generous.

In all her novels, Jane Austen displays it with importance that the nature of education received by a learner is directly dependent on the environment he lives in, the facilities he enjoys, and the materials he gets. But in particular, she elaborately tells us of the failure of the little Prices to create interest in pursuing education in Mansfield Park. Since Portsmouth "was the abode of noise, disorder and impropriety," and "Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be" (ch. 39), Fanny almost lost her hope thinking over the prospects of education in the house. But her own intervention helped to bring back order, and she succeeds in guiding her little brothers and sisters to engage themselves to their studies :

Susan, she found, looked up to her and wished for her good opinion; and new as any thing like an office of authority was to Fanny, new as it was to imagine herself capable of guiding or informing any one, she did resolve to give occasional hints to Susan, and endeavour to exercise for her advantage the juster notions of what was due to every body, and what would be wisest for herself, which her own more favoured education had fixed in her. (ch. 40)

Fanny had the happiness to observe that she had changed the adverse environment of her house to a congenial one; and that this she had achieved by her mild and considerate advice to the young

members of the family. The changing circumstances brought its good effect. Fanny needed reading materials both for herself and for her sister. But

There were none in her father's house; but wealth is luxurious and daring, and some of hers found its way to a circulating library. She became a subscriber; amazed at being anything in propria persona, amazed at her own doings in every way, to be a renter, a chooser of books ! And to be having any one's improvement in view in her choice ! But so it was. Susan had read nothing, and Fanny longed to give her a share in her own first pleasure, and inspire a taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself. (ch. 40)

Fanny's efforts to educate those young people who were brought up in a chaotic environment were fruitful. Her 'students' showed that they had also delicacy, and love and enthusiasm for reading books. They could also form proper opinions, if circumstances favoured them.

In Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland's education in books is poor, so also is her education in the ways of the world. She is one of ten, and her schooling -- the responsibility of her mother -- is severely limited by her mother's necessary absorption with the younger children. Catherine is inevitably left to shift for herself. Her life in a small village like Fullerton has been bereft of opportunities for social development either. She tells Henry Tilney that she can only go and call on Mrs Allen, -- an admission which helps Henry to measure her intellectual poverty. In her quiet village, since she has no scope either for to mix up with intelligent people or for romance, her education remains scanty. It is after staying at Bath and Northanger

Abbey, and mixing with people of varied nature and of judgement that Catherine enriches her knowledge. Her natural intelligence and potentialities serve her well when she confronts the realities of social life. Like Catherine, other heroines also are "taught by circumstances to see the nature of their egotism and folly and are led by repentance into a more mature understanding of the world and of themselves."¹

Elizabeth Bennet's educational environment is not much better than that of Catherine. But Elizabeth tried to become educated by using her father's library. Like Jane Austen herself, Elizabeth is self-taught. She acknowledges in the face of the prying questions of Lady Catherine that she has had no governess, and that her education has been primarily a matter of individual effort : "such of us as wished to learn never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle, certainly might" (ch. 29). Elizabeth's words, clearly, echo the view of Jane Austen that the will to acquire knowledge (for the learners) is essential in an adverse situation. Elizabeth's sisters have no such will for which reason their education is defective. Jane Austen endorses Lady Catherine's view that governess, materials, etc., are necessary for the proper continuation of education, but she does not approve of her vanity in boasting of London Master and of costly instruments for the education of her daughter. Best teachers and materials are, no doubt, helpful for the acquisition

1. Ibid., p. 146

of knowledge and skill. But in Rosings, these have not produced satisfactory results. In respect of the education of Miss De Bourgh, these only add to the dignity of the house in showing that it can afford best of the things in many areas, including that of education.

Since education covers all delicate aspects and liberal faculties of men, Jane Austen criticizes the education of the aristocracy when they are not taught how to behave with their inferiors. Their education, as she shows it, is more a result of the pressures of tradition of thinking themselves superior to their lower classes. The reasonable Darcy understands it, and frankly admits :

Unfortunately an only son (for many years an only child), I was spoiled by my parents, who, though good themselves (my father particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable), allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to wish at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. (ch. 58)

That the true object of education should be to acquire humanism is fully and spiritedly demonstrated in the education of Darcy. With great satisfaction Jane Austen says that Darcy is "properly humbled," and learns to respect the qualities of his inferiors. She is of opinion that mere right and correct learning is not enough for a social being; love for humanity precedes other qualities. And every one should learn to love mankind. This spirit of Jane Austen might, perhaps, be the reason why Q. D. Leavis says :

She was not influenced by the Romantics' extension of language and subject-matter, and for her the proper study of mankind is still man, and then only in the form of the gentleman and lady; for her the legitimate writers for respect and even enthusiasm are still those of the eighteenth century, not Scott or Byron, and the congenial mode of writing, as with the Augustans, is one developed out of satire and Irony.¹

To Jane Austen as to anybody else, the first responsibility of parents is to educate their children. It is very natural that the children are greatly influenced by their parents, and the teaching they get from them lasts long in their mind. Darcy's education given by his parents was responsible for his supercilious attitude towards his social inferiors. The outlook formed at his childhood lasted till he was twenty-eight when he learnt from Elizabeth of its deficiency. Similarly Mr Collins becomes an obsequious character spending the greatest part of his life "under the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father The subjection in which his father had brought him up had given him originally great humility of manner" (ch. 15). Whereas Darcy, thanks to his perception, comes out of the influence of his parents' teaching; Mr Collins cannot. Apart from these two young men, we meet a good number of other young persons who are harmfully influenced by their parents' examples and teachings, and suffer much before they can rectify their errors. Jane Austen's presentation as well as treatment of the early education of her

1. Collected Essays, Op. cit., p. 58

characters reveals her view that guardians have a major role to play in the giving of effective as well as proper education to the young boys and girls. Their carelessness produces disasters in the life of the children.

Since almost all parents in Jane Austen are irresponsible, she does not handle them favourably. Her rational young characters depend either on their friends, or a brother, or a sister for their education. Jane Austen views that errors in education usually carry incorrigible taint for the learners through their life, and are even transmitted to the next generation. Mrs Bennet's education was not adequate, and consequently her influence on her children is quite harmful. Lydia, the worst girl in the family, is her most favourite, and she encourages her daughter's foolish propensities. In fact, Mrs Bennet's faulty education and Mr Bennet's negligence thereof make Lydia irrational, vulgar and senseless. As a result, her marriage with Wickham is emotionally vacant and economically irresponsible. Lydia's elopement awakens Mr Bennet's sense of duty, and he begins to take care of Kitty properly. He would not let her be contaminated living with Lydia :

From the further disadvantage of Lydia's society she was of course carefully kept; and though Mrs Wickham frequently invited to come and stay with her, with the promise of balls and young men her father would never consent to her going. (ch. 61)

Jane Austen would have found in Locke an insistence that the tutor must be a friend before he can be a tutor. He also should be at once loving and reasonable, sincere and experienced. Though Mr

Knightley is not a tutor in the ordinary sense of the term, he does the duties of an ideal teacher. He is well-equipped to impart moral teaching and truth to Emma, and finally makes her more rational than she was before. Henry Tilney in Northanger Abbey also succeeds in educating Catherine Morland. Since Knightley and Tilney are friends to their 'pupils,' they can acquaint them with their shortcomings easily. But Sir Thomas Bertram, in Mansfield Park, fails to endear his children. He is an anxious father, no doubt, but he represses his affection for his children by a constant stiffness and mien of authority and distance. Consequently, the children cannot be free before him, and he fails to understand their problems as well :

Sir Thomas did not know what was wanting, because, though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all the flow of their spirits before him. (ch. 2)

Lady Bertram, on the other hand, "paid not the smallest attention" to the education of her children :

She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting, nicely dressed, on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter... (ch. 2)

Here, Jane Austen is both simple and critical. What the opening sentence suggests is developed through a process of satirical and effective cataloguing of her important 'cares'. Lady Bertram's sister, Mrs Norris, takes the responsibility of teaching the young Bertrams. She is a mean-minded woman and looks at her

self-interest only. Under the care and guidance of such parents and governess the young Bertrams cannot be expected to be properly educated. And indeed they are not. The novelist considers Sir and Lady Bertram, like Mr and Mrs Bennet, guilty of not preparing their children adequately enough to know themselves and their surroundings.

Jane Fairfax, in Emma, is one of the few girls in Jane Austen whose education is excellent, which education is the outcome of the good influence of her guardians and friends. Although she is an orphan, she has been nurtured properly :

She had fallen into good hands, known nothing but kindness from the Campbells, and been given an excellent education. Living constantly with right-minded and well-informed people, her heart and understanding had received every advantage of discipline and culture; and Colonel Campbell's residence being in London, every lighter talent had been done full justice to, by the attendance of first-rate masters. Her disposition and abilities were equally worthy of all that friendship could do. (ch. 20)

Emma is written in her full maturity; and her interpretation of human character and motive in this novel is more glorious than those made in her other novels. However, here, she says that the foundation of Jane Fairfax's excellent education has been made possible by her 'living constantly' with good people, and with 'kindness,' and the opportunity of getting 'first-rate masters.' Unlike Jane Fairfax, Miss de Bourgh lives with a mother who is proud and conceited with her social position. Consequently, despite

her getting first-rate master and materials -- for which they have the means -- Miss Bourgh is unable to develop the liberal faculties of mind. Lady Catherine may be boastful, domineering and objectionable, but we have no reason to doubt that she gives much serious thought to the education of her daughter. Since she is not an efficient guardian to instil virtues into the mind of her daughter, she cannot make her girl develop into a properly educated person. Bringing to our notice inadequate guardians like Lady Catherine, Sir and Lady Bertram, and Mr and Mrs Bennet, Jane Austen clearly suggests that efficient guardians, tutors as well as good company are needed to give proper and adequate education to the young people.

Like the schools, the University of Oxford "made very little pretence of fulfilling its function."¹ Newman declared, though not without exaggeration, that Oxford 'gave no education at all to the youth committed to its keeping.'² In fact, the condition of the formal educational institutions was deplorable. Trevelyan says about the universities that

Instead of being the national centres of learning and instruction, they were little more than comfortable monastic establishments for clerical sinecurists with a tinge of letters; while young men of family, between Eton and the Grand Tour, and a number of more ordinary individuals designed for the church, spent their time there very pleasantly, some with a great deal of drinking and cheerful noise, and some with a little reading of books.³

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1. G. M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century and After : 1782 - 1919, (Penguin, 1968), p. 42
 2. Ibid, p. 42
 3. Ibid, p. 43

Jane Austen is not always respectful of the formal educational institutions and of the students studying there. Formal education, in her novels, usually takes place offstage. But she chronicles the impact of the students' learning in describing their manners and behaviour with the outer world, and in displaying their attitude and outlook towards life.

Henry Tilney is one of the very few Oxford students in Jane Austen whose education as a young gentleman has been thorough. He is rational as well as intelligent, and is quite successful in understanding the spirit of education and of its proper use. He speaks in the language of logic, and is sound in empirical observation. His education makes him so spirited that he protests against his tyrannical father's injustice made to Catherine, and accepts the poor girl as his moral duty towards her. Jane Austen appreciates his education. But in the same novel, John Thorpe, another student of Oxford, is the very antithesis of Henry Tilney. He is coarse in manners, and indecorous and blatant in speech. His education, instead of making him a gentleman, has made him worse. Through him the novelist shows the influence of a corrupt institution on the learners. The prevailing condition of Oxford is presented in the conversation between John Thorpe and Catherine Morland :

[Catherine] And yet I have heard that there is a great deal of wine drunk in Oxford.

[John] Oxford ! There is no drinking at Oxford now, I assure you. Nobody drinks there. You would hardly meet with a man who goes beyond his four pints at the utmost. Now,

for instance, it was reckoned a remarkable thing at the last party in my rooms, that upon an average we cleared about five pints a head. It was looked upon as something out of the common way. Mine is famous good stuff, to be sure. You would not often meet with anything like it in Oxford -- and that may account for it. But this will just give you a notion of the general rate of drinking there.

[Catherine] 'Yes, it gives a notion'; said Catherine, warmly, 'and that is, that you all drink a great deal more wine than I thought you did. (Northanger Abbey, ch. 9)

John Thorpe is the son of a dead attorney and of an indulgent mother. Now, by getting himself into a corrupt institution, he becomes worse, and leads an indisciplined life. His education there does not broaden his mind. Also he fails to acquire liberal insight. He is foolish to boast that "I never read novels; I have something else to do" (ch. 8). So also is Mr Collins who had been a student of a university. Obviously, the novelist seems to have lost faith in the efficacy of the university in imparting proper knowledge.

Jane Austen is in favour of the old-fashioned Boarding school, and complains against the new systems of seminary and establishments where vanity is taught, and which merely profess "in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal acquirements with elegant morality upon new principles and new systems -- and where young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity" (Emma, ch. 3). The Bingley sisters in Pride and Prejudice 'had been

educated in one of the first private seminaries in town,' and were 'proud and conceited,' and thought that they were 'in every respect entitled to think well of themselves and meanly of others' (ch. 4). In Sense and Sensibility, Robert Ferrars who is exactly the fashionable coxcomb of his time, attributes his superiority over his brother Edward to his education at Westminster school. Jane Austen is disappointed to see the nature of education given by the formal educational institutions. But in Emma, she writes of Mrs Goddard's school, giving her own idea of what an educational institution should be like. The school is

a real, honest, old-fashioned boarding-school, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way, and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies. (ch. 3)

The standard of Mrs Goddard's school is not high, but it does not infuse such perniciously false standards as the expensive fashionable institutions or the governesses provide for the learners. Moreover, in economic consideration her school is within the easy reach of the middle class. Jane Austen relates education with economy, because it is difficult for the people of her class to spend an enormous amount of money for the education of their children. In this regard Mrs Goddard's school is suitable for them as well. Since most of the formal educational institutions instead of teaching virtue, wisdom and good breeding taught vanity and imparted pretentious training, Jane Austen became critical of their failure. In the Public schools of her time, says Julia Prewitt Browning, the young people "received the stamp of class," and that these institutions

"aimed openly to inculcate aristocratic and bourgeois values as much as to educate."¹ Robert Ferrars, who is a student of such an institution, displays "aristocratic and bourgeois values" in his behaviour with his near as well as distant relations. In a shop, he is so concerned with picking out a tooth-pick case that he is totally unaware of the needs of others, and keeps the Dashwood sisters waiting for fifteen minutes. He is contemptuous of Edward Ferrars' education as Edward has not "received the stamp" of his family's pride and vanity.

At the close of the eighteenth century a considerable number of books were published on women, of which Thomas Gisborne's An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (1797), Hannah More's Stricture on the Modern System of Female Education (1799), Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) are especially remarkable. These writers stressed the need of female education because of women's deplorable situation in society. Jane Austen was also aware of the restricted nature of women's education, and she frankly says about it in Persuasion. Anne Elliot, the heroine of this novel, regrets that 'education' and 'pen' -- both are in the hands of men in "so much higher a degree" (ch. 23) that she cannot think of her sex equal to men. Jane Austen is usually impersonal, but we almost hear her own voice here. She is, in fact, very careful about her women's education. However, although she considers that women are inherently as rational as men, she accepts discrimination in education between men and women. In a letter to Fanny, her niece,

1. A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth Century English Novel, (New York, 1985), p. 54

she writes :

As I am prevented by the great distance between Rowling and Steventon from superintending your Education myself, the care of which will probably on that account devolve on your Father and Mother, I think it is my particular Duty to prevent your feeling as much as possible the want of my personal instructions, by addressing to you on paper my Opinions and Admonitions on the conduct of Young Women, which you will find expressed in the following pages. ---¹

The 'opinions and admonitions' she had written are not available to us but it seems that she considers the education of a young woman to be different from that of a young man. In Emma, she clearly says that women should retain their feminine virtues. Mr Knightley, who is a gentleman of sound judgement, tells Mrs Weston that Emma's education failed because she did not learn feminine submissiveness. Since Mrs Weston was Emma's governess, he tells her :

You are better placed here [at Randall]; very fit for a wife, but not at all for a governess. But you were preparing yourself to be an excellent wife all the time you were at Hartfield. You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from her, on the very matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid ... (ch. 5)

1. The Works of Jane Austen Vol. VI, Minor Works, ed. R. W. Chapman, (London, 1963), p. 171

Emma herself, for a time, became a governess to Miss Taylor, forcing her to be submissive and therefore preparing her to be Mrs Weston. Mr Knightley, similarly, moulds Emma in such a way that, at last, she wants to be a wife, and learns femininity and perfects her education.

Accomplishments which take the form of some degree of skill in music, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages are considered part of a girl's education. In Mrs Goddard's old-fashioned school "a reasonable quantity of accomplishments" were taught to the girls. It is difficult to be perfectly accomplished because the qualities of an accomplished woman are notably numerous. Bingley says in Pride and Prejudice :

A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved. (ch. 8)

Darcy agrees with Bingley and adds "and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading" (ch. 8). There are no reasons to doubt that Jane Austen endorses these views. To her, 'extensive reading' is particularly essential because it will not only offer pleasure and enrich knowledge but also fire the imagination and arouse noble emotions. It is the best way of enjoying the leisure hours as well. Moreover, books store up the noblest ideals that the world has known, and the reading of these would help and inspire one to foster the noble ideals in one's

life. We know that the Austens were persons of wide reading. Brian Wilks notes :

The reading of the Austen family was wide-ranging, the list of books mentioned in Jane's letters impressive in quantity and variety : books as diverse as Shakespeare and An Essay on the Military Police. All kinds of books, from the classics to the latest piece of romantic fiction, appear in the reading lists and correspondence of the Austen household.¹

Jane Austen frequently reveals that her characters, like herself, get "appreciative acquaintance with the best of English Literature of the present and the recent past, and a sound taste and judgement in all aesthetic matter."² A good reading habit makes people rich in culture and helps them to establish social relationship. Anne Elliot and Captain Benwick in Persuasion become intimate with each other, for they have common interest in books and literature. Jane Austen is highly appreciative of them; but she criticizes those girls who waste their time in visits and gossiping. It is no less important that the accomplished girls should have patience and sincerity in displaying their art; otherwise, like Mary Bennet, they would bore the audience soon. Mary, we are told, "worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments" but "was always impatient for display" (ch. 6).

In her minor work, A Collection of Letters, Jane Austen suggests the essential virtues of an educated girl. A mother who is anxious

1. Jane Austen, (Hamlyn, 1978), p. 75

2. W. A. Craik, Jane Austen in Her Time, (Nelson, 1969), p. 47

about her daughters' education writes to her friend :

I flatter myself that their education has been such as will not disgrace their appearance in the World, and that they will not disgrace their Education I have every reason to believe. Indeed they are sweet Girls -- sensible yet unaffected -- Accomplished yet Easy -- Lively yet Gentle --.¹

1. The Works of Jane Austen Vol. VI, Op.cit., p. 150

The happiness of conjugal life depends, to a great extent, on the nature of education of the couple. Jane Austen cautions men that they should not be infatuated by the beauty of the young ladies. Without adequate education, physical charms have little value. Mr Bennet and Sir Bertram in their youths were captivated by youth and beauty of the women they married, but in their later life they are sorry for their choice. The novelist tells of the reason why Elizabeth Bennet does not see 'conjugal felicity' existing between her father and mother :

Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. (ch. 42)

Early independence and wealth injure education. People like the Crawfords and Willoughby are free -- perhaps too free -- to do what they like. Though they seem to be free, they are actually under the control of their passions, and cannot enjoy true liberty. They ruin their happiness by being the slaves to their whims and caprices. Lydia Bennet, Miss Bertrams, Lucy Steele, and many others who are not under the proper control of their guardians destroy their personal happiness in enjoying their extra freedom. In fact,

adequate education is the only means of enjoying liberty. True liberty and education coalesce in Jane Austen. D. D. Devlin is not inappropriate in viewing that

Jane Austen ... sees that education and true liberty cannot be separated, that we are most free when are most determined by good, that is when most truly educated, and that we must come to like that which is necessary or conducive to our happiness.¹

The young Prices understand well what is necessary for them to achieve happiness in life. They succeed because of their endurance, discipline, and education. Sir Thomas acknowledges that "the advantages of early hardship and discipline, and the consciousness of being born to struggle and endure" (ch. 48), are the reasons of their success. He considers 'early hardship' of the Prices an 'advantage' to their way of success, since his children ruin their fate living in affluence.

The education of the middle class can be seen as a means of earning money in Jane Austen. The educated girls can become governesses and lead an independent life. Jane Fairfax who does not have a considerable fortune prepares herself to enter into the profession to earn her livelihood. The young men, on the other hand, after completion of their formal education can enter into the Law, or the Church, or the Navy. Captain Wentworth, Mr Collins and the like become professionals, and can live in economic security.

1. Jane Austen and Education, (London, 1975), p. 23

By implication, Jane Austen recommends various measures as to how education can be achieved effectively. Reading of books is very essential, but she is in favour of discriminating reading. Clearly she does not approve of reading Gothic novels like A Mystery of Udolpho. In Northanger Abbey, she is critical of this particular genre of literature as the tales of wonder of Gothic novels feed the readers an unhealthy sensations and sentiments. When a young woman chooses such a book for her amusement, it generally renders her ridiculous in her conversation and behaviour. Reading Gothic novels widely, Isabella Thorpe has harmed both her taste and judgement. She influences Catherine Morland to assume that the pleasures of Udolpho are universal. Catherine believes her, and is misled by her reading. Jane Austen is against indiscriminate reading.

Reading, moreover, is no substitute for judgement. In her discussion with Henry Tilney Catherine discovers that she equates reading with reality. Henry teaches her the real truth about her reading by open mockery and earnest warnings. S. Howard Babb is quite right in his observation that : "It is through the dialogues between Catherine and Henry, however, that Jane Austen dramatizes her theme most richly, rendering in them the very process of education."¹ Coming in contact with the witty Henry, Catherine becomes more rational and reasonable than she was before. Similarly, Emma is brought back to her real senses by her discussion with Mr Knightley. The education Emma needs is obtained by her from this gentleman informally from their conversation.

1. Jane Austen's Novels : The Fabric of Dialogue, (Ohio State University Press, 1962), p. 98

The proper selection of reading materials is of great importance. It is the responsibility of the teachers or guardians to recommend best reading materials for their students or children. Edmund Bertram in Mansfield Park exercises substantial control over Fanny's education. He

recommended the books which charmed her leisure, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read and heightened its attraction by judicious praise. (ch. 2)

Fanny received her education properly, and at Portsmouth she played the role of a 'teacher' to teach her younger brothers and sisters. To impart moral education to her 'students' Fanny inspires "a taste for the biography and poetry which she delighted in herself" (ch. 40). On being requested to particularize reading materials for Captain Benwick Anne Elliot, in Persuasion, mentions books of the best moralists, memoirs of characters of worth, collection of letters, etc. All these clearly suggest that Jane Austen prefers the books which are helpful in the making of a person of character and principle.

Judicious praise and just criticism, made, for example, by Mr Knightley and Edmund Bertram for Emma and Fanny respectively, are essential to promote mental development. Jane Austen also recommends good company, and good examples before the learners to inspire them to be good and adequate in their learning. She herself was humble and modest, and wished that people should be so by their education. In a letter to James Stainer Clarke -- the Regent's Librarian -- she writes : "I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity,

the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress."¹ She exaggerates, of course. She was well-read, and got the proper education from the members of her family as well as from the boarding schools in Oxford, Southampton, and Reading; but her modesty taught her not to boast of her education.

Education is all-powerful in forming the minds of her characters. Johnson, her most favourite author, possesses a refreshing belief in the educability of human mind as she does in her novels. Johnson says to Boswell :

I do not deny, sir, but there is some original difference in minds; but it is nothing in comparison of what is formed by education. We may instance the science of numbers, which all men are capable of attaining.²

Education elevates the minds of Jane Austen's characters, and makes them better in every respect than what they are displayed to be at the beginning of the stories. It is the source of their moral courage which inspires them to stand against the injustices made on them. Elizabeth, who has acquired moral strength and courage by virtue of her education, can enter into verbal tussles with the people of a superior class. Fanny Price and Catherine Morland are very ordinary girls when they are introduced to us, but with the progress of their education they gradually learn to speak against errors and misdeeds of others.

1. Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R. W. Chapman, 2nd ed., (London, 1969), p. 443

2. Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Hill and Powel, II, p. 437
quoted in W. H. G. Armytage, Four Hundred Years of English Education, (Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 58

Indeed, education, be it formal or informal, is a never-ending process in Jane Austen. Parents with their children learn in her novels. She displays it clearly that social as well as family peace and harmony depends on the nature of education the members receive. Her power of observation is so minute that she does not miss any aspects relating to education. The theme of education in her novels is so earnest and serious that it would not be unjustified to remark, in an extended sense, that her novels are primarily about education. Life to her is a process of education. Her characters (those she likes) change because of the education they receive from life itself. Characters she does not like refuse to be educated and are, indeed, uneducable.

CHAPTER FIVE : APPROACH TO THE GENTRY AND ARISTOCRACY

Since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 upto the Georgian period, one of the important features of English social history has been, in fact, the success of the gentry and aristocracy in retaining their political power and securing the social deference of other classes. Norman Gash is apt to present a picture of their domination over society :

The true landed class of gentry and aristocracy, together little more perhaps in 1815 than some 4,000 families, constituted the traditional governing elite. Since 1688 they had dominated the political life of the kingdom. They controlled the electoral system, filled the benches in both houses of Parliament, supplied the bulk of the clergy of the Church of England, the officer corps of the army and navy and the upper ranks of the diplomatic service. They commanded the militia; with the clergy they monopolized the magistracy; and through grand juries and quarter sessions they governed the countryside.¹

Land was the main source of social strength; and the gentry and aristocracy owed their authority and prestige to the ownership of land. In comparison with the gentry, the aristocracy was no more than the larger owners of land as Mr Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh are in Pride and Prejudice. Since the greater part of soil belonged to the leisured class, the members of this class became so assured economically and socially that they thought themselves better situated and well fit to govern society in a paternalistic fashion.

1. Aristocracy and People, (London, 1979), p. 18

On the other hand, the economic as well as social status of the middle class was so low that their condition differed widely from that of the governing elite. On account of their differences it would be justified to consider the leisured class as not a horizontal but a vertical division of society. As a consequence of this social order, the fate of society depended on the ability and goodwill of the gentry and aristocracy.

Jane Austen's stories take place, almost always, in the countryside, and the members of the leisured class appear most frequently along with the people of her own class. In portraying the gentry and aristocracy, she examines their responsibility towards society. She takes into account seriously how far they are able to establish polite and rational social relationships amongst the members of their community. Jane Austen judges them outwardly through their manners and behaviour, and inwardly by examining their attitude and concern for human values. Realistic as she is, to her the members of the governing class may have their respective marked individuality, but she is of opinion that they must all have integrity¹ and sincerity in their character.

1. Q. D. Leavis is of the opinion that Jane Austen prized 'integrity' above all other values. Collected Essays Vol. I, ed. G. Singh, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 32

In Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen presents a wider view of society than in her other novels. In this novel, there are as many as five families from the gentry : the Dashwoods, the Middletons, the Ferrarses, the Palmers, and the Brandons. The novelist assesses these social leaders by comparing and contrasting their behaviour and attitude in discharging their social duties and obligations towards their inferiors. The heroine of the novel Elinor and her sister Marianne, who are now in comparative poverty, come in contact with all these gentry in various social settings, and learn that many of them see human relationship in terms of property qualification. The social scene that we find in the novel comprises the economic condition of those who live in abundance and of those who live in want. Indeed the economy of both the groups is a matter of great importance in understanding the characters belonging to them. Yasmine Gooneratne is right in saying :

Mrs Jennings, Colonel Brandon, Edward Ferrars, his mother and his younger brother, Robert, and Mr and Mrs John Dashwood are all characters whose presentation is affected by Jane Austen's preoccupation, in Sense and Sensibility, with money -- its effect on those who have an abundance of it, and on those who must do without very much of it. The reduction of Mrs Dashwood and her daughters from wealth and ease to comparative poverty provides an opportunity to interpret aright the true character of their relatives and friends.¹

1. Jane Austen, (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 75

The novel begins with the Dashwoods. John Dashwood inherits the Norland estate. He promised his dying father that he would ensure the comforts of his mother and sisters. When he gave his promise "he meditated within himself to increase the fortune of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds apiece" (ch. 1). But his wife does not approve of what her husband intends to do for his sisters. She is able to whittle away all John's good intentions. Jane Austen presents John and his wife as detestable persons. The conversation between the husband and the wife has been presented with an unmistakable satiric but comic tone. Their meanness of character as well as materialistic outlook is comically displayed in the second chapter of the novel. Q. D. Leavis is not unjust to remark that :

But the deeper comic level is that struck at the opening of the novel, by the masterpiece of meanness in the dialogue between John Dashwood and his wife : this is comedy in the line of Ben Jonson, and Sense and Sensibility links Jonson with Dickens.¹

Jane Austen's comedy lies in the point that John Dashwood needs to be convinced by his wife to avoid his responsibility, and his wife knows how to convince him. Mrs John Dashwood's manner of convincing her husband is excellently portrayed. She says to her husband using her art of persuasion :

1. Op.cit, p. 156

They [Mrs Dashwood and her daughters] will live so cheap ! Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no expenses of any kind. Only conceive how comfortable they will be ! Five hundred a year ! I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it; and as to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give you something. (ch. 2)

John Dashwood does not fail to be convinced by his wife, and says, "I believe you are perfectly right" (ch. 2). Clearly, Jane Austen makes fun at his sense of responsibility. He is so deeply persuaded that even he believes his mother and sisters will be able to give him 'something.' Such social leaders, like John Dashwood, cannot be of use to others. Here as elsewhere we find him quite unfit to carry out his obligations properly.

When John Dashwood comes to London, it becomes his moral responsibility to meet his sisters -- Elinor and Marianne -- who were living with Mrs Jennings there, but he does not. He freely admits that his sisters are not considered worthy of an early visit. He contemplates to go to Berkley Street on the third day of his visit on the prospect of meeting Mrs Jennings, who is a woman of very good fortune. Since John Dashwood's concept of propriety is distorted, his manners and behaviour towards his poor sisters are not warm. But to those, whom he considers rich, his manners are very cordial. He is most attentively civil when he meets Mrs Jennings and Colonel Brandon, because he thinks that they are rich enough to be treated warmly.

Jane Austen depicts the Harley Street dinner party to show that John Dashwood and his wife are completely unfit as host and hostess. They demonstrate their own importance and ability in the party but are unable to make it a success :

The dinner was a great one, the servants were numerous and everything bespoke the mistress's inclination for show, and the master's ability to support it No poverty of any kind, except of conversation, appeared; but there the deficiency was considerable. (ch. 34)

Thus the whole thing dwindles into mechanicality. To Jane Austen, and to the cultured sections of her novels, conversation, and not show, was the heart of a social gathering.

John Dashwood is related to the Ferrarses by marriage. Except Edward Ferrars, the other members of this family are disagreeable, being materialistic, selfish, and snobbish. Mrs Ferrars and her son Robert fancy themselves as aristocrats and behave rudely with their inferiors. Jane Austen is contemptuous towards the Ferrarses. The way she introduces Mrs Ferrars, clearly, expresses her dislike for this old lady :

Mrs Ferrars was a little, thin woman, upright, even to formality, in her figure, and serious, even to sourness, in her aspect. Her complexion was sallow; and her features small, without beauty, and naturally without expression; but a lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from the disgrace of insipidity, by giving it the strong characters of pride and ill-nature. (ch. 34)

Her 'pride and ill-nature' make her insensitive to the qualities of her social inferiors. She bullies and slights Elinor, whom she "eyed with the spirited determination of disliking her at all events" (ch. 34). Her 'determination' is so disgraceful that it culminates in a rude refusal to look at Elinor's paintings. Although everyone else praises the pretty paintings, Mrs Ferrars disregards it. When these were presented before her she returned them to her daughter expressing her disinclination to view them. And almost as a contrast, she began to praise the painting of Miss Morton. When it was protested by Marianne she looked exceedingly angry, and drawing herself up more stiffly than ever, pronounced in retort "Miss Morton is Lord Morton's daughter" (ch. 34). Mrs Ferrars' speeches of denunciation against the people of her lower orders, and those of praise and admiration for the aristocracy bespeak her silliness. She is so prejudiced to rank and fortune that even in evaluating the merits of a work of art she takes into consideration the social status of the artist. Obviously, Jane Austen disapproves of such an attitude; and dislikes the woman who combines "the worst of aristocratic snobbery and bourgeois materialism."¹ The fact, however, remains that ridiculous though she is, Mrs Ferrars is not unreal. People like her existed, and do still, in any class-ridden society.

Not unlike her mother, Robert Ferrars also boasts of his friendship with the aristocrats. He even claims superiority over his brother, Edward. Robert's very first appearance in the novel at a

1. David Monaghan, Op. cit., p. 57

jeweller's shop is conceited, and Jane Austen establishes him as a caricature of a coxcomb. It does not add to his credit to agree to marry Miss Morton when Edward refuses to marry her. He becomes an object of indignation when he marries his brother's fiance -- Lucy Steele -- privately, and takes pride in it. The novelist sarcastically says :

He was proud of his conquest, proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately without his mother's consent. What immediately followed is known. They passed some months in great happiness at Dawlish, for she had many relations and old acquaintances to cut; and he drew several plans for magnificent cottages... (ch. 50)

By her presentation as well as criticism of Robert Ferrars and his near connections, Jane Austen makes them objects of ridicule. They are egregious, and are obsessed with their own prestige and wealth. They do not consider that their social status brings with it an obligation to attend to the needs of others.

Sir John Middleton and Mr Palmer, unlike the Ferrarses and Mr and Mrs John Dashwood, are well aware of their social responsibilities; and are very much ardent in discharging them. Sir John, who is a gentleman of consequence, is thoroughly good-humoured and is friendly to all. His zeal and enthusiasm to help others is beyond doubt. He seemed anxious to accommodate Mrs Dashwood "when she was suffering under the cold and unfeeling behaviour of her nearer connections" (ch. 4). Sir John offers her a small house on very easy terms. In his friendly letter, he assured Mrs Dashwood that everything, which she might think necessary, would be done for their

comfort. "The whole of his letter was written in so friendly a style as could not fail of giving pleasure to his cousin..." (ch. 4). Sir John helps Mrs Dashwood by providing her with a house; while John Dashwood and his wife become happy by letting them go away. When Mrs Dashwood and her daughters arrived at Barton Cottage, Sir John welcomed them and offered "them every accommodation from his own house and garden in which theirs might at present be deficient" (ch. 6). The arrival of the Dashwoods seemed to afford him satisfaction, and their comfort became an object of real solicitude to him. He did his best to make his tenants happy :

His kindness was not confined to words; for within an hour after he left them, a large basket, full of garden stuff and fruit, arrived from the Park, which was followed before the end of the day by a present of game. (ch. 6)

Sir John's philanthropic attention to his duties as a social leader makes him worthy of respect. He feels happy in helping the unfortunate Dashwoods, who had been well off in the past. His poor and vulgar relations -- the Steele sisters -- are also accorded warm reception in his Park. In showing kindness to the poor and the unfortunate, he has always the satisfaction of a good heart. Because of his benevolent outlook and attitude he is remembered with gratitude by the people who come in contact with him.

On his first appearance, Mr Palmer does not make a proper impression on us; but in course of time he proves himself to be a responsible person. Jane Austen presents him as an excellent host who is very much alive to the needs of his guests. He displays real

humanity by his reaction to Marianne's illness. He sacrifices his own comforts and does everything possible for Marianne. Mr Palmer is an unfailing gentleman in his attention to all his visitors. The novelist appreciates him particularly because he is ready to help the unfortunate in time of their needs.

But although Sir John and Mr Palmer perform their social duties properly, they are not always well-mannered in their behaviour. As a consequence, sometimes, their good intentions are misunderstood. It is to be noted that, Colonel Brandon is the only character in Sense and Sensibility who is well-mannered and, at the same time, a proper social leader. David Monaghan rightly says, "Brandon's grasp of his social responsibilities is superior to that of almost any other member of his circle."¹ Jane Austen presents him as a gentleman : "He was silent and grave. His appearance, however, was not unpleasing... though his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible and his address was particularly gentlemanlike" (ch. 7). Colonel Brandon is never rude, cold or fickle. He has a charming personality of his own, and becomes lovable to all by offering Edward Ferrars a living, and by bringing Mrs Dashwood to Marianne's sick-bed. He is aware of the sufferings and troubles of others, and has the heart to sympathize with them. His virtues as well as sacrifice endear him to Marianne who considered him "too old to be married" two years ago. But now she gradually begins to regard him, and becomes happy by marrying him.

Clearly, in Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen, in her presentation

1. Ibid. p. 47

as well as treatment of the governing elite, stands by those who are conscious of their social responsibilities; and ridicules those who think of their self-interest and self-importance. She presents the former group earnestly and with a warm heart, and the latter group comically to make fun at them.

Like the members of the gentry in Sense and Sensibility, the members of the aristocracy in Pride and Prejudice have their own and characteristic idiosyncrasy towards their moral obligations to society and to their social inferiors. A remarkable evidence of this is provided by the contrast between Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Darcy.

Lady Catherine is a compulsive betrayer of aristocratic arrogance. A sense of superiority characterizes her conversational mode. She treats inferior people in a manner designed to make them fully conscious of their rank. Her manners are dictatorial and insolent. She values a man not by his virtues but by his birth, fortune, and connections. Jane Austen presents both Mrs Bennet and Lady Catherine almost

in the same way, although the two ladies are socially wide apart in terms of birth and fortune. They are "equally ill-bred, mercenary and overbearing, equally fond of getting their own way in everything and of bullying those who oppose their right to do so."¹ When Lady Catherine is opposed by Elizabeth Bennet in not yielding to her wish, she feels humiliated and poses her famous question quite angrily : "Miss Bennet, do you know who I am" (ch. 56) ? She wants that people of her lower classes must abide by her. Her vanity and pride of self-importance make her a great snob. She does not have any respect for the middle class, rather she thinks so meanly of them that when she learns that Mr Gardiner keeps a man-servant, she tells Elizabeth not without an air of ridicule : "Oh, your uncle ! He keeps a man-servant, does he ? I am very glad you have somebody who thinks of those things" (ch. 37).

But Darcy is different from his aunt. Outwardly he appears to be proud and supercilious in his behaviour towards the members of his inferior orders, but inwardly he shares and respects the ideal of others. When he realizes that he was not right in his behaviour with the intelligent girl, Elizabeth, he frankly says to her :

You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most disadvantageous. By you I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased. (ch. 58)

1. Yasmine Gooneratne, Jane Austen, (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 99

Darcy has the moral courage to acknowledge the influence of the inferior people in correcting his attitude towards them. This is a virtue that all aristocrats do not share. Darcy, by virtue of his good principles, earns the confidence and respect of Elizabeth, who hated him for a long time, and even rejected his marriage proposal. But at Pemberley, she, for the first time, "felt that they had entirely mistaken his character" (ch. 43). Later, when she came to know more about his admirable qualities, she accepted him most willingly. She tells her father : "I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is" (ch. 59).

Darcy is well aware of his tenants and servants living in and around Pemberley. His house-keeper Mrs Reynolds greatly appreciates her master's generous attitude towards all of them :

"He is the best landlord, and the best master," said she, "that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw anything of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men." (ch. 43)

Life at Pemberley is characterized by a concern for others. Since the people's happiness is under Darcy's guardianship, he strives to do well for them. His treatment towards his inferiors is rational. But Lady Catherine 'scolds' her tenants to bring them into peace, if there is any dispute between them. Darcy's benevolence teaches him to help people, even, secretly. The Bennets are almost strangers

to him, but he does a lot for the good of the family. He buys a commission for Wickham, and takes other proper steps for the marriage of Lydia Bennet with Wickham. Lady Catherine, on the other hand, represents pretension and materialism. She thinks of her own interest only. Jane Austen takes her heroine, Elizabeth, to the diametrically opposed world of Rosings and Pemberley to assess rightly the different attitude of Lady Catherine and Darcy towards the people of their inferior station.

Unlike Lady Catherine, Darcy is concerned for others, and he has the heart to recognize the worth of any person irrespective of his birth and fortune. Darcy persuaded his friend, Bingley, not to marry Jane Bennet for her connections with a tradesman and an attorney. But when he meets Mr Gardiner, the tradesman, he is pleased with his (Gardiner's) charming personality and accepts him as a friend. Darcy tries to understand others. This is the reason why he is not angry with Elizabeth when she rejects him. Darcy contemplates over the matter, and writes to her a long letter which bears the marks of a polished mind, and where he begs 'pardon' and 'apologies' several times for offending her. Frank, humble, and courteous as he is, he earns respect and honour of Elizabeth, and thus creates a new chapter in their mutual understanding for one another. Since Darcy is able to establish rational relationship with everybody else, Jane Austen is pleased with him.

The size of the leisured class varied constantly. "Ambitious politicians, political lawyers, successful generals and admirals could carve out a fortune and a peerage for themselves in a single lifetime."¹ Even, by marriage a man could enlist his name in the upper class. General Tilney in Northanger Abbey is one who became a man of fortune by marriage, and likes to fancy himself as an aristocrat. His conduct resembles that of a Gothic tyrant. "He is the ancestor of Sir Walter Elliot in self-indulgent vanity, though obsessed with money as well as with rank."² Since the General is a hypocrite and out and out a materialist, he treats Catherine Morland with an exaggerated courtesy and deference in his own interest. But when he learns that the heroine has no fortune, he turns her out of the house in disgrace and dishonour. In this novel, Jane Austen satirizes the General's self-centredness and his insincere charm. Yasmine Gooneratne is right in remarking that he is "actually guilty - but of greed, callousness, and cold selfishness, common sins than his guest suspects him of."³ Externally the General tries to impress others by his manners but he is quite unattractive because of his selfishness. He is inconsiderate even to his sons and daughter.

The novelist satirizes his pretence of an aristocrat as well as his love of aristocracy and landed property. Both as a father and a social guardian, he is quite unfit to perform his responsibilities; and is reduced to impotence. At the end of the novel, he

1. Norman Gash, Aristocracy and People, (London, 1979), p. 19

2. W. A. Craik, Op. cit., p. 16

3. Jane Austen, (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 53

seeks reconciliation with a son (Henry Tilney) who denies his authority, and with a clergyman (Mr Morland) who accuses him of being a man of no good principle and manners. Throughout the novel, Jane Austen is severely critical of the General, observing that his cold selfishness and cruelty were responsible for the ruination of the peace and happiness of others.

Sir Thomas Bertram, in Mansfield Park, is a very influential member of the governing class. Jane Austen finds him defective in carrying out his responsibilities as an efficient guardian, but in all other spheres, he is quite admirable. Sir Thomas is always just and well-intentioned in his attitude and behaviour towards the members of his family, and to his social inferiors as well. His awareness of his responsibility increases on his return home from Antigua. He is now warmly appreciative of Fanny Price, and treats her with great care and affection. Lady Bertram, Fanny's aunt, is surprised at the invitation of Fanny at the Grants'; but Sir Thomas considers it very natural and approves of her going to take the dinner without the smallest hesitation. Mrs Norris insists that Fanny should go on foot to the parsonage of the Grants but Sir Thomas objects :

'Walk !' repeated Sir Thomas, in a tone of most unanswerable dignity, and coming farther into the room. -- 'My niece walk to a dinner engagement at this time of the year ! Will twenty minutes after four suit you ?' (ch. 23)

Sir Thomas's sense of responsibility as well as his generosity is clearly superior. In Sense and Sensibility, the rich connections of Mrs Dashwood do not come forward to help her in time of her needs.

But in Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas's kindness towards his poor relations is, undoubtedly, remarkable. He extends his generous support to meet the needs of the Prices. Fanny gratefully acknowledges her uncle's efforts that he undertook towards her brother's support and advancement in his profession. When William returned to his uncle's Park after seven years, Sir Thomas had the 'pleasure of receiving' him. Very often, he talked with his nephew and tried to understand him. This he did with pleasure. The Baronet has earned the confidence of the Prices in such a way that Fanny is sure her uncle will do everything for the promotion of William. Fanny tells her brother : "My uncle says nothing, but I am sure he will do everything in his power to get you made [Lieutenant]. He knows, as well as you do, of what consequence it is" (ch. 25). Unlike many other social leaders, Sir Thomas has earned the confidence of his poor relations. There are no reasons to doubt that Jane Austen approves of his conduct and behaviour.

"William's desire of seeing Fanny dance, made more than a momentary impression on his uncle" (ch. 26). The Baronet "steadily inclined to gratify so amiable a feeling -- to gratify any body else who might wish to see Fanny dance, and to give pleasure to the young people in general" (ch. 26). He arranged a ball in honour of the young Prices, although his daughters were absent. Mrs Norris objected to it, but he did not attach importance to what she said :

'My daughters,' replied Sir Thomas, gravely interposing, 'have their pleasures at Brighton, and I hope are very happy; but the dance which I think of giving at Mansfield, will be for their cousins. Could we be all assembled, our

satisfaction would undoubtedly be more complete, but the absence of some is not to debar the others of amusement. (ch. 26)

By granting Fanny the privilege of opening the ball, Sir Thomas dignifies Fanny's social position to the neighbourhood. And his open display of admiration shows that he is very much pleased with her.

Fanny's marriage with Edmund makes Sir Thomas happy. Unlike Sir Walter Elliot, Lady Catherine, and General Tilney, he values the virtues of a man, rather than his or her birth and fortune. He is charmed at Fanny's beauty, integrity and sincerity. Fanny is indeed the daughter that he wants. Jane Austen says :

It was a match which Sir Thomas's wishes had even forestalled. Sick of ambitious and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper... he had pondered with genuine satisfaction on the more than possibility of the two young friends finding their mutual consolation in each other for all that had occurred of disappointment to either ... (ch. 48)

As a truly benevolent person, Sir Thomas rejoices in what he had done for the Prices. His aid helps them much in their upliftment. He gets satisfaction by helping them thinking it as his responsibility for his poor relations.

Emma Woodhouse, who is the daughter of a gentry, is a young woman with an acute sense of the divisions of social rank. Although she is compassionate to the poor, and feels it her duty to visit and help them, she does this in a condescending manner. She considers that her judgement is always infallible, and therefore desires that her opinion be respected by her inferiors. Because of her snobbery, smugness, condescension, and other vices Emma fails to establish social relationships with the Coles, Mr Elton, Mr Martin, Miss Smith, Miss Bates, and Jane Fairfax.

Jane Fairfax draws the attention and acclaim of the neighbourhood by her excellent accomplishments. But Emma cannot take it easily. She considers Jane her chief rival and hates to hear her praised. She dislikes her presence in Highbury, and willingly avoids her company. She understands it well that she is not just in her treatment of this poor girl, and feels a guilty conscience. But she cannot change her attitude towards Jane as she (Emma) takes great pride in her superior social position.

Unlike Emma, Mr Woodhouse and Mr Knightley are admirable characters. They are friendly as well as amiable to their social inferiors. Mr Woodhouse extends his friendship with Mrs Bates and Mrs Goddards with whom Emma does not like to establish harmonious relationship. But they are very often 'fetched and carried home' at the wish of Mr Woodhouse. He, even, frankly appreciates his servant's daughter who is well-mannered and civil :

I am very glad I did think of her. It was very lucky, for I would not have had poor James think himself slighted upon any account; and I am sure she will make a very good servant; she is a civil, pretty-spoken girl; I have a great opinion of her. Whenever I see her, she always curtsseys and asks me how I do, in a very pretty manner; and when you have had her here to do needlework, I observe she always turns the lock of the door the right way and never bangs it. I am sure she will be an excellent servant. (ch. 1)

Such appreciation of servants is, undoubtedly, the sign of a good master. Although Jane Austen presents this old man as a fusser, his intensions are always kindly, and he is ready to praise the virtues of others without considering their social background.

Mr Knightley is a sensible landowner whose sense of responsibility is superior to everyone else's in Emma. He is kind, considerate and attentive to the needs of less fortunate villagers. He helps Miss Bates and her mother in various ways. He sends them the last of his apples every year; provides them with transportation to the Coles' dinner party; and enquires whether he can be of service during his business trip to Kingston. Mr Knightley is always critical of Emma when she is whimsical in carrying out her own decision. He understands it well that her patronage of Harriet Smith would do the poor girl harm. Therefore, he becomes angry when Emma persuades Miss Smith to give up Robert Martin and to win Mr Elton. He censures the heroine as she plays with the girl to gratify her emotional as well as unjustified desires. Although Emma shows to the world that she is friendly to her protegee, Mr Knightley does not believe it. He rather says,

"You have been no friend to Harriet Smith, Emma" (ch. 7). He has genuine feelings for Mr Martin and Miss Smith, and argues with Emma in favour of their marriage.

Mr Knightley thinks that it is his moral obligation to help his social inferiors. His relationship with Mr Martin, the farmer gentleman is excellent. They have mutual respect and trust for one another. Mr Martin is of opinion that Mr Knightley has a thorough regard for all the members of his family. Indeed Mr Knightley speaks warmly of this farmer :

I never hear better sense from any one than Robert Martin. He always speaks to the purpose; open, straightforward, and very well judging.... He is an excellent young man, both as son and brother. (ch. 8)

The man, who is warmly praised by the sensible Mr Knightley, is ignored by the snobbish Emma. Emma tries to detach Miss Smith from Mr Martin's association as she considers him only a farmer of 'the inferior society of Highbury' (ch. 3).

Mr Knightley does not see "human relationship in terms of class snobbery and property qualifications"¹ as Emma does. He observes society from the very sense of his responsibilities for others. This is the reason why he rebukes Emma in noticing her gratuitous insult, and the pain she inflicts on Miss Bates at Box Hill. He considers

1. Arnold Kettle, Op. cit. p. 95

that the ruling elite should be compassionate to their inferiors :

"Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance, I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner. Were she your equal in situation -- but, Emma, consider how far this is from being the case. She is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live [sic] to old age must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion." (ch. 43)

It is wrong, to Mr Knightley, for a young woman of birth, education and fortune to take advantage of a woman who is self-evidently her inferior in all three.¹ Mr Knightley is so generous a landowner that he reminds his social equals, like Emma, to be conscious of their duties. He tells Emma :

"Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do; a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance. How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates ? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation ? -- Emma, I had not thought it possible." (ch. 43)

To a sensitive and responsible occupant of Emma's social position, it is his noble duty to be compassionate to his social inferiors -- this is the teaching that Mr Knightley wants to give Emma almost

1. Graham Holderness, 'Disliking the Heroine in Emma,' Critical Essays on Emma, ed. Linda Cookson and Bryon Loughrey, (London, 1988), p. 86

throughout the novel. Mr Knightley's philanthropic attitude and generous outlook make him one of the best gentlemen amongst the gentry and aristocracy in Jane Austen.

In Persuasion, Sir Walter Elliot is bitterly criticized for his social vanity and snobbery. The tone of the opening paragraph indicates that a personality is being mockingly presented :

Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents ... he could read his own history with an interest which never failed ... (ch. 1)

And again :

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character : vanity of person and of situation. ... He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. (ch. 1)

These initial accounts of Sir Walter's vanity about his rank and personal appearance in the tone of ironic mockery reflect Jane Austen's strong disapproval of this self-centred Baronet. In fact, he is the greatest among her snobs. Like Emma, he sees, more strongly, human relationship in terms of class snobbery and property qualifications. He sneers at the social position of Captain Wentworth when the latter is introduced to him as a 'gentleman' by Mr Shepherd, his lawyer :

'Wentworth ? Oh ! ay, Mr Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term 'gentleman.' I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unaccounted; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common.'

(ch. 3)

Although Sir Walter has sunk into a decadent condition and is in debt, he does not recognize the sailors, men of humble social background, as gentlemen. It is for his aristocratic vanity that he prefers to lose control of Kellynch Hall rather than sacrifice any of the external marks of his rank. He abandons his house and goes to Bath to lead an idle life there. He neither feels for the members of his family nor acknowledges any obligations to his social inferiors. Through him, Jane Austen demonstrates her concern, in the very transitional period of England, that the traditional governing elite are no longer able to carry out their personal and social responsibilities.

The landowner's very title, gentleman, conferred social and economic privileges on him; but it, at the same time, burdened him

with various duties, obligations and responsibilities. In her works, Jane Austen judges the members of the gentry and the aristocracy individually, and finds out how much they are sincere in performing their duties to meet the needs of their social inferiors. Realist as she is, her characters belonging to the leisured class are not all alike, rather they are quite different in their outlook, attitude, and social origin. Jane Austen appreciates those ruling landowners like Mr Darcy, Sir John Middleton, and Mr Knightley who are endowed with noble spirit and admirable qualities to carry out their social responsibilities. On the other hand, she is critical of Lady Catherine, General Tilney and the like who have in them disagreeable features -- materialism, selfishness, snobbery, etc. The novelist, very often, presents them comically and sarcastically.

Jane Austen is, above all, aware of the importance of human values. Her sympathies are with those who have integrity and sincerity in them, and who are aware of the necessity of the well-being of others. Perhaps, these are the reasons why Q. D. Leavis remarks :

Here we see the marks, over and over again, in the Austen novels, of a fastidious nature, a fine spirit and a keen sense of honour and of value for integrity, which seem to me to show Jane Austen to be closer to Conrad than any other novelist is. Both are natural aristocrats but both are concerned for human values.¹

1. Collected Essays, Op. cit., p. 28

Conrad is far away from Jane Austen, inasmuch as his exotic settings. Isolation, imperialism, colonialism, adventures, crime and guilt are the facts he takes particular care to stress. He is earnest to explore hollowness and darkness in man, and seldom finds interest in love and marriage. He never appreciates Jane Austen because of the subjects she deals with. In a letter to H. G. Wells he wrote : "What is all this about Jane Austen ? What is there in her ? What is it all about ?"¹ Although Conrad and Jane Austen stand apart for their settings and subject matters, they have the same respect for human values, and the worlds they create are essentially moral. Both are objective in their observation of human nature as well. Since she gives pre-eminence to individual responsibility and choice, Jane Austen is ready to stand by anyone who respects and upholds human values irrespective of class background or social status.

1. Jane Austen : The Critical Heritage 1870 - 1940 vol. 2, ed. B. C. Southam, (London, 1987), p. 300

CONCLUSION

D. H. Lawrence thought that Jane Austen was snobbish.¹ But it is clear to us that she was in no sense a snob. She is never heard to boast to anybody of distinction of her new acquaintance. It is true that she is unconcerned with the people beneath her own class, but a novelist like her, who describes, identifies, and ridicules such snobs as Emma Woodhouse, Sir Walter Elliot, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and Mrs Ferrars, cannot be a snob herself. To a careless reader, she sounds like a snob. For instance, Emma discourages Harriet from marrying Robert Martin, saying

A young farmer whether on horseback or on foot,
is the very last sort of person to raise my
curoosity. The yeomarry are precisely the order
of people with whom I feel I can have nothing
to do. (ch. 4)

It is not Jane Austen speaking with Emma's voice, rather she stands quite apart from Emma's views. She praises the farmer warmly and considers him a gentleman. At the end of the novel she allows the farmer to marry Harriet.

Jane Austen never acknowledged herself as a social equal to the leisured class, rather she was always reluctant to mix with them. Her life and letters as well as memoirs and biographies on her clearly suggest that she belonged primarily to the professional middle class, and that she was greatly influenced by her own class in writing her novels. The lesser gentry can be treated as her social

1. 'Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover,' Phoenix II, ed. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore, (London, 1968), p. 513

equals on account of the Austens family tradition, and of the circumstances in which she was born and brought up. Her novels amply demonstrate that she felt for the members of her own class most earnestly, and thought of their various class features in relation to the governing elite.

Her first novel Sense and Sensibility presents an old traditional social world where the people of her own class are dominated by the whims and caprices of the leisured class. The members of the gentry are comfortably ensconced in society, and they are tolerated and accepted by the middle class. There is none to protest against them. But from Pride and Prejudice to her last novel Persuasion, Jane Austen records the social protest together with the rise of the people of her own class. One can easily notice that she is pleased to see the middle class gaining in importance. Her presentation of this class is warm, ~~sincere~~, and capable of making the readers sympathetic. The novelist delights to speak of qualities that members of this class possess. Most of her clergymen, naval officers, tradesmen, and governesses are active, sincere, spirited and well-mannered. They, by virtue of their sincerity and devotion to their duties, establish their rights in society and earn good name for themselves. Although Jane Austen judges her characters by their individual merits, and not class characteristics, it would not be unjust to remark that she, in general, cherishes her tenderness for the people of her own class and stands by them because of their values, virtues and nobleness of spirit. She upholds the professionals' work ideal which was taking shape in opposition to the ideal of aristocratic leisure. But it is also true that she does not like those professionals who regard

their profession as a privilege rather than an obligation, and as a gateway to enter into the best society. She is not oblivious of their faults either. In fact, she sees the faults of the people of her own class as much as she sees these of the members of the governing elite.

Jane Austen's world is essentially an eighteenth-century world in its habits, tastes, and appearance, but she is apt to depict fundamental as well as universal human problems of class society of all time. Her novels are deeply concerned with the problems of the middle class. She, unlike her predecessors, presents her characters in a social context; and sees how they are affected by their real problems of life. Jane Austen found that the ordinary social intercourse between the members of the upper and the middle classes was not congenial and satisfying. The latter group suffered from economic insecurity as well. And these social and economic factors become the causes of fear of the middle-class characters in her novels. She does not shy away from depicting the unpleasant social realities of the economic system in which she lived.

Her principal object of observation is, of course, human psychology. She observes men and women in a real but secular world, and records how they act and react in their practical situations of life. Whenever she speaks of the manners, behaviour, ideas, beliefs, attitude and outlook of the middle class, she correlates these with their economic and social situation. Since they suffer from various

fears they become competitive even with their neighbours and connections to achieve their own ends. Their fear, more than anything else, decides the way they establish and maintain social and personal relationships among themselves. The novelist is unfailing in emphasizing that class background as well as economic condition of her characters is very significant in formulating their thought process and in its expression through dialogues.

Since Jane Austen is a conscious novelist of a transitional time of history, she records the characteristics of a dynamic society. From Sense and Sensibility to Persuasion we notice a process of social evolution. The powerful leisured-class members of her earlier works are in a decaying state in her last novel. Here they suffer from moral and economic crisis; while the middle class is economically well off, and appears as a dominating force. The people of Jane Austen's own class are no longer afraid of the aristocracy, rather they are accepted as respectable social beings.

In her presentation of the fear of women Jane Austen keeps in her mind the social background in which her women live. Women in her novels suffer because they are treated with discrimination, and are deprived of legal as well as social rights. She shows that division of labour makes women economically insecure, and it becomes the cause of their fear and anxiety. Since they do not inherit property, and since their prosperity depends on that of their husbands, a sort of fear looms in the minds of the young girls; and the gallant young men often try to exploit it. As a woman novelist, Jane Austen is very particular in depicting the social disadvantages of her women.

With her deep psychological insight the novelist excels in displaying various fears of her characters. She is apt to relate their outward mode of expression to their inward thought process. This is the reason why her presentation of fear and anxieties of the people of her own class impresses us as accurate. She connects the fear of her characters with certain social factors like employment opportunities and the laws of inheritance. She does not ignore these factors as well as circumstances of her characters while justifying their fear or ridiculing their irrational display of it.

Jane Austen's houses are the centres of her fictional world. But no two houses are alike. She regards her houses as homes only when these become places of peace and happiness for their inmates. This is the reason why her houses are not only physical but also moral. To her, physical facilities are needed for a home, but they are of secondary importance. Physical facilities become charming if there is a correspondence between the outward beauty and the quality of inner life. She sees her homes as such places where traditional values and virtues as well as taste for art and culture are truly cultivated and preserved. Because of her uncompromising moral test many of Jane Austen's great houses, e.g. Mansfield Park and Northanger Abbey, fail to turn into homes, whereas a small rented-house of the Harvilles in Persuasion becomes a worthy home. The novelist, in fact, does not indiscriminately endorse all her houses as homes.

She prefers country dwelling places, and demonstrates it clearly that a secure house is a necessity for domestic happiness. In the absence of such a house potential or real homelessness would create a great crisis in the lives of the members of a family. Jane Austen is always serious and ardent about the theme of a home, and is never ironical about it.

Education elevates the minds of Jane Austen's characters, and it is the source of moral courage of the people of her own class in standing up against the injustices perpetuated on them. Education is a recurring thought in her works. In judging a character she considers it essential to find out whether the person concerned is of 'ill breeding' or of 'good breeding.' Since education is essential to transmit the values and accumulated knowledge of society to a new generation, she takes into consideration the means by which it can be made effective.

Those, who receive defective education in her novels, pollute the serenity of home atmosphere. The errors, follies, and sins as she points out are substantially the result of flawed upbringing and failed education. Jane Austen views that errors in education usually carry incorrigible taint for the learners through their life, and are even transmitted to the next generation. She is serious in pointing out the consequences if education is mishandled or misdirected.

To her education is more than a mere gathering of information. It should address the whole person, and be a moral as well as an intellectual training. Education, in her novels, covers up all

delicate aspects and liberal faculties of mankind. That the true object of education should be to develop human qualities is fully and spiritedly demonstrated in her works. With the progress of their education Jane Austen's characters learn how to speak and behave properly with others, and to adjust themselves in their worlds. The novelist assesses the standard of education of her characters by their intelligence, good sense, and developed taste.

Formal education is not of great importance to her. Although she deals with the young people, few of them are seen studying in educational institutions. She is critical of the corrupt institutions and of the students studying there. Jane Austen seems to have lost faith even in the university. She is in favour of the old-fashioned Boarding school, and complains against the new systems of seminary and establishments where vanity is taught at the cost of 'enormous pay.' She relates education with economy because it is difficult for the middle class to spend 'enormous' money for their education.

Although she believes that women are inherently as rational as men, she accepts discrimination between men and women regarding their education. She wants to see feminine submissiveness in her female characters. Accomplishments in music, drawing, and in modern languages are considered part of a girl's education in her novels. This is one of the areas where she is very clearly under the hegemony of Augustan culture.

Comprehensive education is important to her, and she sees education as a life-long process. Her heroes and heroines go through

a process of learning that involves the acquisition of self-knowledge, and the ability to regulate their behaviour and to judge others. So long as they remain inadequate in understanding themselves and their world in which they live, their process of education continues. In her novels, parents learn along with their children. Jane Austen emphasizes that natural sweet disposition needs to be nurtured. She demonstrates that excellent education is possible if the learners live 'constantly' with good people and with 'kindness,' and get the opportunities of learning under the 'first-rate masters.'

The landowner's very title, gentleman, confers a degree of social and economic privileges on him but does at the same time burden him with various duties, obligations, and responsibilities. Jane Austen examines the sense of the governing elite, and assesses them in consideration of their behaviour with their social inferiors. Within the aristocracy and the gentry were enormous variations in respect of their wealth, outlook, and social origin. The novelist does not like those social leaders who see human relationships in terms of class snobbery and property qualifications, and who fail to meet the proper needs of their social inferiors. She ridicules those members of the leisured class who are insincere in recognizing the admirable qualities of the middle class. She is often sarcastic

in displaying some of their disagreeable features like materialism, selfishness and snobbery. Jane Austen would like to see the governing elite as compassionate to their subordinates, and as believers in human virtues. She appreciates those who are friendly and amiable in their social relationships with socially inferiors.

Jane Austen's main focus is upon the experiences of young women on their path to marriage. They come in contact with different sets of people and learn about their way of life as well as their class features. Most of her heroines are maltreated, since they are socially and economically inferior to the leisured class. Their society values people, and places them on the social map in terms of their rank, connection, and money. But Jane Austen places her characters according to their moral strength and human qualities. She is, above all, aware of the importance of human values. Her writing is soberly humanistic dealing with men in society, and in relation to their moral and social duties. Jane Austen is both witty and ironical but she is not a writer of Restoration comedies.

Her deep acquaintance with her society and with the members of her family and connections provided the stimulus for the acute and witty studies of her own class and that of the leisured class from Sense and Sensibility to Persuasion. Her literary culture invariably aims at showing human greatness. This is the true culture of literature, which Georg Lukacs succinctly defines in his Studies in European Realism :

Above all it is awareness of human greatness, the ability to see human greatness everywhere where it truly manifests itself in life, even though in hidden, imperfect forms as yet incapable of clear expression. It is the ability to discover the growth of humanity and to experience it with inner understanding; the ability to recognize in their first manifestations new things, things pregnant with the future.¹

Jane Austen is a great novelist who has acquired for herself this literary culture based on a culture of life. Her poor middle-class characters, Jane Fairfax, Fanny Price and the like, who are neglected by their social superiors, become admirable to her because of the sane and sympathetic attitude she brings to bear upon their presentation and evaluation. This literary culture is, at the same time, the source of her inexorable hatred of every form of cruelty, snobbery and hypocrisy of the leisured class in relation to the people of the middle class.

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