

THE IMPORTANCE OF MONEY IN DECIDING THE FUTURE OF A CHARACTER IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Jane Austen is probably the first English novelist to show the material values interwind so closely to the social and moral values. She has portrayed young ladies setting their aspirations and ambitions through marriages. She has presented the material considerations to be the most significant factor in determining young girl's future. Through her characters, she has tried to establish the exact value of money. She always explains how much money each of her characters have. While studying her novels we find that whenever a new character is introduced in her novels his or her economic status is soon established. The financial status of each of their families is set down in first few pages of the novels. She is even criticized for presenting her characters on economic basis.

Keywords: Jane Austen, Relevance, Gentry, Material, Concern, Fortune, Eligible, Security.

Introduction

In Jane Austen's fictional world marriages are shown passionate and altruistic love successfully fusing with a stable, harmonious and mutually enhancing relationship with promises of domestic bliss. Jane Austen is often criticized on the grounds of reducing marriage to a business transaction, the point that is missed is that she did it intentionally. Because she wanted to show that those who do that, do so at the cost of reducing their selfhood and dignity. Considering the contemporary social scene and economic constraints of the gentlewomen, matrimony was left as the only practical and prudent option for stability of life Jane Austen highlights the importance of sensible marriage and never approves of a marriage which is an outcome of blind passion. While going through Jane Austen's novel we find that she tries to illustrate the marriages done blindly for money is absolutely wrong. But through her characters she also tries to describe that a marriage in poverty is also not a smart decision. In her novels, we find that the circumstances force the young ladies in such position that they are under psychological and social pressure to get married. In her view it was wrong to ignore the economic facts of life above all others. The material values play an important role in deciding the destiny of the heroines of Jane Austen.

Objective of the Study

- To study the material prospects in the novels of Jane Austen.
- To study the class-conscious mentality of the people in her all six novels.
- To study the importance of money in development of a relationship in Jane Austen's novel.

Research Methodology

This research article is based on secondary data and relevant data collected from various research papers, journals and websites which provide information related to Jane Austen and her novels.

Reason why Young Ladies are in Search of a Prosperous Groom

- Women in 18th century had very less career options – either to become a teacher or a nurse or a governess.
- The control of wealth by men had made women completely depended on them. Therefore, marrying an eligible man was the most respectful solution for the problem.
- In the male dominated society women were devoid of ancestral property. In absence of a male heir the property was transferred to any male relative not to the daughters of the family.

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- A single women had a dreadful life at that time. A woman without a family had no respect and social status.
- The society wanted to establish family units to nurture the children, to assuage the sexual drive and to protect hierarchal property and wealth. In this social unit, women obviously had an equilibrium in life based on social and economical security, fulfilment of her duties to family and society as a mother and a companion, and if favored by luck then also were successful in establishing a loving and respectful relationship with her husband.

The Role of Money in the Life of the Characters of Austen's Fictional World

- **Pride and Prejudice:** The entailment of the estate reduces the prospects of the five Bennet sister's matrimonial life. Mrs. Bennet's ambition of marrying her daughter seems completely unrealistic in lack of modest dowery. Charlotte Lucas is a reminder that there were very less possibilities for young women at that time. She at the age of 27 had chosen to settle with Mr. Collins not out of romance but for the company of a man, the comfort of a home and social security. We find that Mrs. Bennet seek for economic security and personal independence for her five daughters through matrimony. Here we find that a mother trains her daughters to capture a husband rather than to attain her own personal development. The only aim of Mrs. Bennet was to get her all daughters married to man having a large fortune. She may appear as a stupid lady but her daughter's settlement in their life is quite genuine. When Lydia gets eloped to Wickham, Elizabeth Bennet appears to be more anxious about the lake of money and connections rather than of the love- affection and well- being of her sister. Again Mr. Darcy had an assumption that there can't be a healthy relationship between upper- and middle-class people as they develop relationship out of greed.
- **Sense and Sensibility:** In the novel we find that the earlier death of Mr. Dashwood appears to eliminate whatever chances Elinor and Marriane might have had of marrying well. The Dashwood sisters were left with a small estate after their father passed away. Marriane was in love bond with Willoughby but he deceives her for money. He marries Miss Grey, who is supposed to have fifty thousand pounds. A clear instance of this is Lucy Steel. Even after getting engaged to Edward Ferrers when she learns that he is now not the heir of the property, she switched herself from Edward Ferrers to his younger brother Robert Ferrers. The Middle-aged Colonel Brandon becomes a suitor to the tender Marriane as he has enhanced his wealth and status greatly by the time he met her. Money constitutes a sort of underlying beat throughout the novel. A character's financial fate is very often described in the novel. John Dashwood openly encouraged his half- sister Elinor to pursue a marriage of her convenience. About Marriane he remarks that after having an unsuccessful relationship with Willoughby it was now not possible to get a secured future. When Marriane failed to secure a matrimonial alliance of her liking, she had to enter into a compromising but practical matrimonial alliance with Colonel Brandon a man double of her age. People are rewarded financially for their behavior and attitude. The author never misses to add that there is a price to be paid for everything. Elinor Dashwood eventually attained \$850 per annum. Marriane enjoys with two thousand a year, when circumstances forced her to marry the middle-aged Colonel Brandon, at nineteen herself.
- **EMMA:** Only in Emma material concerns are of less relevance to the progress of the relationship of Emma and Knightley's. But Emma rejects Robert Martin for Harriet due to economic conditions. We find that Emma's indulgence in other people's live and her attitude towards various individuals is largely depended upon their economic position in comparison to her own. Emma has her own choice of love and marriage but all the characters are not as fortunate as her, such as Harriet and Miss Bates. Miss Taylor, a companion and friend cum governess of Emma, she becomes a happy wife, Mrs. Weston. Her hybrid personality and growth in status is suggestive of a progressive society. Jane Fairfax has so far led a happy life in the Campbell family but her delicacy and beauty creates problem to her as a governess. So, she also has to seek for economic security and personal independence through matrimony. Again, Emma is so class- conscious that when Mr. Elton, the rector of Highbury, shows his interest in Emma, she reminds him about the gulf which exists between the two. Emma shows no interest in mixing up with people inferior to her class. Here Jane Austen transcends the rigid structure of class- conscious people with their nefarious link with money. Emma happily does charity for her poor neighbors but mixing with them was against her self- respect.

- **Persuasion:** This novel very well explains the deficiencies of the female life. Dutiful and gentle Anne Elliot is persuaded to give up the man she loves because he has no fortune and has uncertain future. Wentworth becomes an eligible bachelor after had gained fortune even in Lady Russell's opinion. Earlier Lady Russell even don't consider Captain Went worth a gentleman because he belonged to lower gentry. It appears as if the process of courtship and marriage are the by- products of commerce and property. Men like Sir Walter Elliot and William Elliot are the Typical male who objectifies other, especially women purely on the ground of their appearance and attire. Sir Walter Elliot boasts over his ancestral property. To limit his expenses, he had to from his former house. Such people are said to be blind with unworthy prestige. A person's virtue, strength and natural grace all are next to it. Anne Elliot's unmarried status at the ripe age of 27 had brought her no fortune and social status. She worked as a nurse to her sister and her children when needed, otherwise no other responsibility. Only marriage could fill this void of her life. She is rewarded with the man whom she loved after a long period of eight years. She finally succeeds in getting her old love and affection.
- **Mansfield Park:** Fanny Price has no material prospects as she has neither social status nor financial expectations. She enjoys the privileges of gentry only because of Sir Thomas Bertram's generosity. While going through the novel we find that Sir Bertram's own children brought disgrace and defame to him. He realizes that expensive education is all waste unless it is employed practically in one's life. Maria, the elder daughter of Sir Bertram agreed to marry Mr. Rush worth only because he was a wealthy person, not out of passionate feelings for him. After a compromising marriage she runs away with Mr. Crawford and ruins her life and family prestige. Mary Crawford considers money as the most desirable thing in her life and to fulfill her desire she flirts with Edmund Bertram although she had no fillings for him. Fanny Price overcomes the constrains of wealth by her characteristic virtuous beauty and sense of duty and propriety. She was indeed the daughter Sir Thomas wanted. Moreover, Fanny Price herself becomes so addicted to the affluent life style that when she gets an opportunity to spent some time in her own house, she feels very uncomfortable there. Edmund Bertram gets attracted to the charm of Mary Crawford but never denies to the virtues of Fanny Price.
- **Northanger Abbey:** The novel revolves around money and marriage. Isabella Thrope rejects the love proposal of James Morland for a more wealthy and prosperous man. Her flirting with Fredrick Tilney shows the fact that she is more concerned in marrying someone wealthy than marrying someone for love. She ditched the person who really loved her only for material concerns. General Tilney's attitude towards Catherine Morland suddenly changes after he comes to know that she is not as rich as she was supposed to be. She suddenly becomes unfit for his son as she doesn't belong to a good gentry. Catherine and her brother James Morland both had to leave there dear one's due to their less fortune. Here genuine emotions are useless when it come to a wealthy fortune. The entire atmosphere of the novel is pervaded by the growing influences of money. It is basically for the acknowledgement of social status. The characters know and understand each other in terms of their connections and fortunes. While, discussing about Isabella Thrope, Miss Tilney enquires about her wealth. The upper-class people made more wealth through marriages. A bride not belonging to a wealthy family would be unable to bring expected dowry. Actually, a character's future is linked with their financial fate not by their generosity. The novel discusses social position in terms of property and power.

Conclusion

Jane Austen's novels contribute considerably to the gentleman ideal at her time and to the Victorians. She wrote from the point of view of a lady than a person or gentry. She has written as a woman on the issues that ladies of the contemporary age had to face. She had presented through her fictional world the condition of a woman and a practical solution for the sufferings she had to bear. Her novels present the picture which illustrates to perfection of ideals. She has presented to us the proper behavior of a gentleman. Besides, her thoughts on love and marriage we find her views on good taste, on elegance, on gentility and on principles. She displays one, and reflects on the other to present her views. She must be looked on in a social and realistic context.

Jane Austen places her words very carefully. She takes the advantage of the possibilities of the immediate context to reinforces and clarify what she meant to a particular word. She has presented to the readers the proper virtues by portraying morally strong characters from which they could learn.

Jane Austen definitely values material aspects but it would must be added here that the material values are not all priority over human conduct. Here, her intention is to portray virtues by portraying ambiguous character. The characters whose material interest prevails over other consideration are presented in negative aspects. The characters define themselves by their behavior and actions. In Jane Austen's world there is no place for inter- class marriages. Her novels point out that social disparity is against happiness in marriage. One should not be ambitious to marry out of his or her class. There is no doubt about the fact that Jane Austen values money but she has never accepted the snobbery and vulgarity born out of the wealth conscious people. Unlike her contemporaries she had never celebrated humanity with poverty. Her sensitive women married out of love but on the other hand they also wanted money and social security. No one can deny the association of money for an elegant life. In all her novels, we find the end is with happy marriages. The heroine acquires both a suitable mate and adequate resources. They enter into a relationship of reciprocal give and take; within a loving and caring marriage which is vital to happiness. Hence, we can say that her heroines seem to be very real not fanciful. Jane Austen's approach to personal relational ship is based on practical philosophy rather than on theoretical teachings. Its true that there is no free mixing of conflict. Assets were not of much importance for Jane Austen but she mentioned it specially to point towards the fact that the absence or presence of these were directly related to the rise and fall of the socio- economic status of the gentry.

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