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INTERPRETING THE FEMALE POINT OF VIEW:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF JANE AUSTEN AND GEORGE ELIOT

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## Declaration by the Candidate

*I hereby affirm that, except where acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my own investigation and research, that it is record of work completed by myself, and that it has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree.*

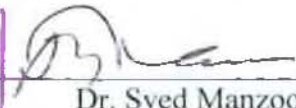
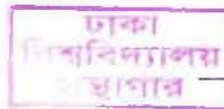


Amanee Khandker

## Certificate of the Supervisor

*This is to certify that **Amanee Khandker** has carried out research under my supervision, and that she has fulfilled all the necessary conditions for the submission of this thesis for the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of the University of Dhaka.*

448496



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## ABSTRACT

As long as women writers were absent from the creative field, a woman's point of view was never truly disclosed through literature. To say specifically about novels, the authorial voice generally represented male point of view. Time changed, women emerged as novelists but some of them only followed the established norms while the others were "typed" or "biased" as they could not maintain neutrality. As a result, the female point of view was yet to be established and recognized.

The female point of view reflects the social existence of a female mind – celebrating the outlook of half of the world's population. The work written from a female consciousness would reflect reality in a different way than what a male view would reflect. It is not usually a personal view but a general view delivered from a female point of view. Jane Austen and George Eliot are the leading names in this regard, who have presented their novels from the female point of view.

As novelists, Austen and Eliot were more given to observation and introspection and least in imagination. Their experience in life, their social outlook and religious beliefs modified the contexts of their novels. Every part of their novels – narrative structure, plot, characters – is arranged according to the authorial intention. The authorial point of view i.e. the female point of view is established with prominence within the novels' structure.

In general, the authorial implications in their novels are related to the social context: Austen and Eliot were the critics of their society. To read their novels is to experience society through women's eyes. Austen takes the domestic sphere while Eliot focuses on a community and both stressfully project the daily aspects of

social life that they are critical about, reflecting the situation in a two-fold way – general situation, and the women’s situation in particular.

The most striking aspect of the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot is perhaps their portraiture of women. Being women themselves, they could paint the shades of women’s characteristics through observation and introspection, all of which have parallels in reality today. In case of female characterization, the authorial involvement is observed in different ways. Specifically, the female protagonists of their novels are directly linked with authorial intentions, imagination and philosophy. The minor female characters are delineated from their own life experience. In both cases and prominently in case of the female protagonists, the two authors have focused on the psychological dimension of women’s world in their own ways. They have projected the minds of their female protagonists and exposed the inner thoughts and emotions behind each act, showing the changes women go through and how they face reality.

Male characters in the novels of Austen and Eliot are lively to the extent that women find them so, or women could explore. However, it is a new experience as the male characters are depicted from a female perspective and these characters are stressed in terms of their attitudes towards the female characters. Also, the two authors celebrate the men of advanced and uncommon thoughts.

Moreover, Austen and Eliot have experimentally presented different relationships in their novels to sort out the reasons behind the complexities of human interaction.

On the whole, both Jane Austen and George Eliot have presented the negative and positive aspects of society and characters, analyzed the reasons behind and painted their vision through their novels. Their remarks counter-balance those of the male writers.

## PREFACE

My experience of going through the works of Jane Austen and George Eliot has been firstly as a casual reader. Interestingly, whenever I read these novels, I could feel in them a prominent presence of a voice – of a consciousness that is presenting the story from a different perspective. Though an Austen novel seemed totally different from an Eliot novel, I felt that both are projected from a common point of view – the female point of view. For this specifically, I found the novels of these two novelists totally different from Hardy's or Dickens' and even from those by the Brontës'.

However, in the second phase, when I chose Jane Austen and George Eliot's novels as my field of study for the M.Phil programme, I attended more to the identification of that voice – that consciousness. It is the authorial consciousness that controls the narrative arrangements, plot-construction – and even characterization. The whole thesis is based on this identification – how these two female authors established the prominence of the authorial philosophy and thus the female point of view in their novels. This has introduced the female perspective in the male field of fiction.

I shaped my whole thesis on the basis of such views. In the first place, I scrutinized the various aspects of the novels of these two authors and elaborated my thoughts and developed the structure of my thesis. The methodology I have used for this study – feminist narratology, which is not widely practised – perhaps best suited my purpose of research. It is because, following this, I could explore the subjective aspects through examining the narrative structure, plot, characterization – that is, all the technical aspects of the novel.



Secondly, I studied the novels of the contemporary writers of Austen and Eliot – the Brontës, Hardy, Dickens and so on. Also, I tried to get an idea of the tradition of women’s novel writing that mainly started from Aphra Behn to examine comparatively what have been the problems in case of other female novelists in establishing the female point of view.

Thirdly, I consulted some notable critical works that include contemporary reviews of Austen and Eliot’s time up to recent studies. Some of these works seem to be in agreement with my arguments and some are not. Eventually, in such a process, I could interpret more clearly the female point of view in the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot.

Though I have developed my thesis on the basis of my own views, these views may resemble the views of any reader or critic. Such similarity, in fact, will only strengthen my argument that Jane Austen and George Eliot have been successful in establishing the female point of view in their novels.

Amanee Khandker



## INTRODUCTION

### THE FEMALE POINT OF VIEW

#### (A) The Beginning of Women's Writing

Women's gradual emergence as fiction writers and the development of the English novel as a genre happened almost simultaneously. From the second half of the seventeenth century, women writers were growing in number. Almost from the same period, the English novel began to take shape. More importantly, the writings that led to the perfection of the English novel form include those by some women writers. Moreover, Richardson, Fielding, and Defoe – regarded as the pioneers of English novel – were also themselves inspired by these female fiction writers. Aphra Behn's (1640 - 1689) use of the epistolary form and narrative voice had been a great inspiration for the later novelists. Along with her, Mary Delarivier Manley (1663/ 70 - 1724), Eliza Haywood (Fowler) (1693? - 1756), and Charlotte Turner Smith (1749 - 1806) were some of those forerunners.

It is quite interesting to note that the act of storytelling had always been related to women. Traditionally, women have been regarded as storytellers and the activity of narrating a story is identified with the archetypal feminine activities of spinning and weaving. Helen Hackett has discussed this aspect in her book, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance*. She has referred to the word "text," which itself derives from the Latin word for weaving *texere*. She has also referred to some mythical stories related to women and storytelling.

For all these reasons, women's fiction writing was never an inconceivable matter. Added to this, women were expected to write foolish and fruitless tales. Hackett has referred to the phrase "old wives' tales," which is used in many compositions to refer to women's so-called foolish stories. Hackett writes, "The

idea that women were especially liable to tell idle and foolish tales was well established by the sixteenth century and was already described in the phrase 'an old wives' tale'" (13). Hackett has tried to find out the reason behind that. She writes, "These depictions and recollections are no doubt partly a reflection of real life: since women were less educated and literate than men, their storytelling was likely to take oral forms and to be relatively 'foolish'" (15). Thus, lack of education, which is itself the result of social constraint placed on women and an absence of social recognition of women's creative abilities, had been the main reasons behind the concept that women's thoughts are usually fruitless and lack depth.

Female fiction writers, however, continued to write amidst such reality and presumptions. Social constraints and social preconceptions led them to be more concerned about their own place in society. For several reasons – anguish against the patriarchal social system, an earnest but inherent desire to enjoy freedom from social norms, inability to gain higher education, etc. – women writers were likely to be engrossed in the matters related to women's existence. Various discriminations, the obstacles and turbulence a woman faces in the social life and how a woman with extraordinary qualities has to fight with these circumstances had been the subject of most of the novels by women writers. Generally, the problems seemed to be placed one-sidedly, stacked against women, which prodded the writers to take a feminist approach. The other strain in the fictions of the early women writers had been a celebration of imagination, which is amply testified by the amatory fictions, gothic novels and romances. May be from an aspiration to sketch out their dreams, to create heroines of great prowess and valour – who would win in every stage of their lives – women writers created plots full of

passion but those were far from realism – except in the few novels that had been realistic.

Thus, on one side, some novels projected themes that narrowed down to certain issues, extracting them from reality and taking them to an emotional sphere, on the other, control of form in the plot was noticeably firm. Obviously, all writers wrote – as they always do – within a certain formal structure but the forms, which these women writers used, for example, Romance, Gothic, etc., dominate the composition. The plot seems to be controlled by the form and the authorial point of view is much more guided by the plot. For example, the setting of the Gothic novel would be the same in most novels. The insertion of the elements of mystery and fear would demand a certain type of plot. So the author would like to describe things from the gothic point of view.

It is commonly assumed that the writer's philosophy of life would be reflected in a given work. Be it clear or ambivalent, the reader expects to realize the writer's point of view. It is also undeniable that biologically, psychologically and sociologically men and women experience life differently and they would interpret life in different ways. Men and women as writers therefore, would project their ideas from different angles and focus on different aspects. But while there is a general acceptance of the male point of view as the norm, the female point of view remains an exception, even an aberration. Women writers therefore struggled to establish the female point of view in their novels. This is because the relation between the real author, who is a female, and her text is not sufficient to establish female point of view. The implied author must possess female consciousness and the narrator must render narratives of the texts from the female perspective – and unfortunately at this point, women writers struggled. Though some women writers were able to put their experiences of life and even use direct autobiographical



elements in their novels, they still struggled to establish the female point of view. Because in this case, firstly, the readers cannot understand the interconnection between the female writer's experience of life and the story of her novel without the knowledge of her personal life and the context of writing. Secondly, because the narrative arrangement of such novels was influenced by the conventional and established formats. In case of narratives, when these women writers used first-person narrative, they could reveal the story from the narrator-character's point of view, which involved personal elements and sentiments, and when they used third-person narrative, it was the male voice. However, the narrative and the plot construction had to be arranged from the female consciousness to establish the female point of view in a novel. This is not something to distinguish from the mainstream or masculine thoughts – it is also not about feminine practice of writing as Hélène Cixous proposed. It is the embodiment of the author's own experience of being a woman that would be representative of one-half of the world's population. It is to know what the author observes through her female eyes. However, it is not to overlook some root causes of a problem, blame one part of the society, and defend her own sex. It is not to focus only on certain feminine issues, extracting them from the overall social sphere, without analyzing how these issues are related to other matters of society.

The female point of view reflects the social existence of a female mind. As such, in the novels by women writers, there is an exploration of the mind of the female characters. Through introspection, the female author is able to render the unspoken thoughts of women and interpret events and actions with a clarity that comes from lived experience. The act of writing is not necessarily autobiographical, but it would bear the essence of her own life and life in general. From the female point of view, the author would discuss the fundamental problems



of public and private life – not in a defensive mood towards matters related to women but focusing on the core causes of every suffering women and men go through, and figuring out the reasons behind the problems. However, all these authorial conceptions and thoughts would take a visible shape in every part of the novel through the virtual existence and comments of the implied author, through the narrator's persona and the narrative arrangement, which is related to plot construction and characterization of the novel.

One significant element that seems to help crystallize the female point of view in the work is realism, in the sense that when a piece of work or its contents written from the point of view of female consciousness reflects reality, it produces reality in a neutrally descriptive way. As a result, such a work would first of all, represent a general outlook of the female mind without the intrusion of any personal view of a particular woman. Secondly, the work would render the female outlook from a neutral standpoint, and thirdly, appeal to both male and female readers. If a survey is done regarding the female novelists from the beginning through the modern age, it would be clear that there have been some brilliant women writers, though few in number, whose works are based on realism and who have been more or less successful in expressing their points of view in their individualistic way. George Eliot, quite confident about that, writes in her essay, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists":

Happily, we are not dependent on argument to prove that Fiction is a department of literature in which women can, after their kind, fully equal men. A cluster of great names, both living and dead, rush to our memories in evidence that women can produce novels not only fine, but among the very finest; -- novels, too, that have a precious speciality, lying quite apart from masculine aptitudes and experience. (107)

George Eliot herself was one of those leading names in this respect. Another name that comes before is Jane Austen. When discussing the cultivation and the

establishment of female point of view, the names of these two eminent novelists surely come first.

### **(B) Jane Austen and George Eliot: Cultivating the Female Point of View**

No educational restrictions can shut women out from the materials of fiction, and there is no species of art which is so free from rigid requirements. Like crystalline masses, it may take any form, and yet be beautiful; we have only to pour in the right elements -- genuine observation, humour, and passion (Eliot "Silly Novels" 107).

Both Jane Austen and George Eliot have been bold enough to express, portray and characterize what they thought or wanted to – partly following the convention and contemporary rules but going beyond convention and the contemporaneous at the same time. Stepping outside of the canon, they have added newness in an idiosyncratic way and have created styles of their own.

In their stories, Jane Austen and George Eliot mirrored the world they inhabited from their points of view as women. They are women first and then authors; their outlook reflect women's point of view. The narrative structure and arrangement, thematic structure, setting and characterization of their novels expose their points of view as women. Impartiality is an important quality observed their work – impartiality in the sense that as they have observed, they have observed without taking a side and thus not defending their position and have tried to explore the hidden facts and comment on them. They have never crossed the borderline beyond which they would be called feminists, though the position they have taken has been characterized as subversive. They are blamed as subversive and are criticized for not showing their female protagonists victorious over the social bondage. Austen is reported to tend towards a compromise while Eliot appears to push things towards a tragic strain. Eliot has also been blamed for not



creating a character like her own self. In reality, both the authors reflect on the fact that it is very difficult for human beings and especially for women, to come out of the social constraints. Still, the narrative actions in the novels of these two authors open up prospects of peace and happiness in an individual's social life, which in Austen's novels is produced through acts of compromise and in Eliot's novels, through extremity. The treatment of reality in these novels have been two-fold – firstly, the representation of what reality is and secondly, the visualization of how reality should be. These two aspects are present in all of Austen's novels, while Eliot uses them unevenly among her novels. When Eliot concludes her novels with a sense of uneasiness and failure, projecting the death of individuality, she hints at what reality is. And, when the closure shows a peaceful understanding, it is Eliot's projection of how reality can be.

In their novels, Jane Austen and George Eliot have animated the interactions between human beings, and the influence of the surroundings on the lives of human beings with a special focus on the lives of women. Everyday events, trifle moments, and significant turning points that constitute the life of average human beings is what each of the novels of Austen and Eliot portray in the most realistic way. The authors' self-felt observations create this realism. In other words, it is the world the authors have come across that finds a reflection in the authors' outlook.

Jane Austen, busy with the pure domestic life – the mornings, evenings and nights in parlours, kitchen and living rooms – the life of the ladies of those days, brings the emotions and sufferings in the pages of her novels that are so fundamental to women living in a social setting but which were never dealt with so much importance. Many criticize her limited range, her method, but what critics fail to appreciate is that Jane Austen has tried to explore the fundamental human

emotions from a domestic point of view. She has tried to expose the domesticity from a woman's point of view – how a woman feels and how difficult she thinks life is. Exploring domesticity leads to the broader issues of social life too. Every domestic problem arises out of a reaction of some wider social and economic problem. By showing the attitudes inside the house, Austen also hints at some of the major social and economic issues. To think from this angle, her novels are not narrow in range – her focus is on some specific aspects of a woman's life but the implications are much wider than that.

George Eliot too has tried to explore the fundamental human emotions from a woman's point of view. But she has chosen plots wider in range and scope than those of Austen. In general, Eliot's novels encompass the whole situation of the community life; and so the focus is alternately placed on the domestic sphere, working places, public meeting places, which are all parts of the community picture. This has given Eliot the scope to experiment on human emotions and attitudes from different angles – an individual in his or her private life and in his or her public life – and the contrast between them. In addition, this enables Eliot to experiment on the existential questions of human beings, especially of women, in a family life and in society. Thus, the difference between Jane Austen and George Eliot lies in the range of plot of their novels and in their approach as authors but both these novelists at the same time, are ultimately interested in exploring fundamental human condition under the social structure by projecting human emotions and human attitudes with a special focus upon the situation of women.

Such exploration and experimentation has been possible for the rich structural formats of the novels of Austen and Eliot – the technical aspects of the novels play the most significant role in implementing the authorial conceptions, concerns and messages. The strength of the novels of Austen and Eliot lies in their



narrative structure, with the narrator firmly at the centre. A third person or heterodiegetic narrative is usually applied, which works in three forms as focalization varies – representing the authorial voice, narrating the story, merging into specific characters but still narrating from the third person position and articulating from the characters' perspective. Historically, women writers have chosen private forms of narrative – the letter, the diary, and so on – and thus have failed to address public readers directly. However, Austen's and Eliot's novels have an almost direct communication with the readers. Thus, choosing public narration is itself a bold step in establishing their points of view as females.

Considering the authorial presence in the narrative, it is generally believed that “a single, consistent, unpersonified voice is more likely to be associated with authorial beliefs” (Hawthorn 98). Therefore, the use of third person narrative in the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot naturally benefits from the reflection of the authors' outlook. Susan Sniader Lanser prefers “authorial voice” to “personal voice” in the narrative and writes in her book, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*: “...since authorial narrators exist outside narrative time (indeed, ‘outside’ fiction) and are not ‘humanized’ by events, they conventionally carry an authority superior to that conferred on characters, even on narrating characters” (16). Lanser also writes,

... such a voice (re)produces the structural and functional situation of authorship. In other words, where a distinction between the (implied) author and a public, heterodiegetic narrator is not textually marked, readers are invited to equate the narrator with the author and the narratee with themselves (or their historical equivalents). This conventional equation gives authorial voice a privileged status among narrative forms.... (16)

In the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot, readers can frequently observe almost a direct intervention of the authorial voice, which has the qualities Lanser points out. The authorial presence in the narrative of these novels establishes a

relation with the readers and thus can pass on thoughts and concepts of the authorial mind. The authorial voice in Austen's novels has the tendency to satirize a point and comment in the most humorous manner. Eliot's is rather more analytic – generalizing a particular situation, she renders her philosophy of living life as a social being. In cases of both Austen and Eliot, the authorial voice becomes one of the paths through which female point of view is celebrated and thus, the predominant function of the authorial comments is to reveal the authors' innermost concerns unhesitatingly.

The plots follow not a certain direction but what Austen and Eliot feel necessary for a plausible outcome of the storyline. At the same time, the authors show their difference in this respect. Jane Austen's happy-ending scheme suggests a way of solving the fundamental problems. The beginning and the middle part of her novels project the natural phenomenon – how a girl struggles in life, and how she overcomes the complexities she faces and the ending hints at the possible happiness after suffering, realization and redemption. However, George Eliot's novels are psychological studies of human aspirations and failures that are followed by philosophical generalizations. Her plots flow with the minds of the characters, almost always taking new patterns and end unexpectedly.

In spite of the prominence of themes, the scenes of the novels of Austen and Eliot maintain the free flow of the storyline. The story automatically takes shape from the themes and thus builds the format of the novel. At this point, Austen and Eliot together differ from other novelists for whom the story comes out to be at the centre while for Austen and Eliot, the authorial implications or themes are at the centre around which the story is formed.

In this study, the two authors are marked in terms of the relation between thematic and the narrative structures and plot construction, characterization and

closure of their novels. The intention is to explore through these formal structures the causes, ideologies and social implications of their novels. The study will attempt to discover these different approaches in their work to bring out their freedom as writers and their effort to establish the place of female point of view in the overwhelmingly male field of fiction. The study will attempt to uncover firstly the technical arrangement of the novels – the type, gender and characteristics of the narrative voice, the effect of the implied author, the themes behind the narratives, the arrangement of plots and scenes, the method of narrative presentation and so on. Secondly, the study will relate these formative analyses with the thematic analyses to explore the social and ideological issues inherent in the novels. This will be an approach through attending the main narratological categories to identify the similar and dissimilar characteristic patterns of the overall narrative structures of the novels of the two authors. To sum up, this study will attempt to recognize the existence of female point of view in the novels of Austen and Eliot in four ways:

Firstly, by exploring the narrative structure and narrative arrangement of the novels.

Secondly, by exploring the linear and temporal structure of the novels.

Thirdly, by outlining the thematic structure through the analysis of the narrative structure and arrangement.

Finally, by assuming the main authorial concerns and implications from the thematic structure.

Thus, this study will explore the underlying narrative and thematic structures of the novels of Austen and Eliot that will show how all these novels have structural resemblance. The intention behind this is to understand the inherent pattern the authors have used to establish the female point of view in their novels.



The uniqueness of their writing style allows for a comparative analysis of their approach. The study will thus attempt a comparative study of their styles rather than on the individual standing of Jane Austen and George Eliot as novelists. The study is an endeavour to reflect upon the resemblances and the differences in their style, thought and approach – the characteristics that most represent the female point of view.

The narrative arrangements of the novels of Austen and Eliot reflect on certain authorial implications related to the social context – Chapter One deals with that. The first section of this chapter focuses on the narrative structure – the narrative voice, tone and arrangement – and the narrated world or the settings of the novels of Jane Austen while section (B) of this chapter deals with the above aspects in Eliot's novels. The third section of Chapter One works with the linear structure of the novels of both Austen and Eliot, and stresses upon the relationship between the story and the plot. Section (D) of Chapter One brings out certain sociological issues that belong to society in general and influence the discourse elements in the narratives of these novels. Therefore this section is a discussion on the selection of sequence of actions that is mainly based on the sociological issues like predominance of money and wealth, subsided effect of religion and religious institutions and the effect of the overall social situation upon a social being. On the whole, Chapter One is an exploration of the narratological elements of the novels of Austen and Eliot that are chiefly influenced by the authorial ideological standpoints on the social matters. Thus this chapter brings out the content of authorial implications related to fundamental sociological realities.

Chapter Two works on the common patterns followed by both Austen and Eliot in characterizing women in their novels. Female characters of Austen and Eliot's novels can be divided into two groups or sets on the ground of the authors'



method of creation – from a subjective angle. The first set of characters narrated from zero focalisation, are representative of various common traits of social women. The two authors have created these characters purely from their observation. Section (A) of Chapter Two deals with such female characters of various shades and analyses the narrative content of the novels to explore the symbolic or representative characterizations of women. On the other hand, through introspection and observation, Austen and Eliot have created one other group of female characters. This group is taken into consideration in Section (B) to explore the technical and implicational aspects behind these characterizations. These female characters have a strong tendency to retain their individuality, seek for their wishes, and remain firm on their ground. Almost all of these female characters are protagonists and serve as focalizers or reflectors in some parts of the novels. Section (C) is an analytical representation of the basic traits the female characters of the novels of Austen and Eliot project, which strongly bear universal elements in them. This shows how the two authors have used the female characterization to establish the female point of view.

Chapter Three deals with the two common groups of male characters in the novels of Austen and Eliot: the first is the average men of society who can only follow the time and the standards of social life without thinking; they are the men of society. They are obedient and submissive to social rules and regulations – Section (A) is about them. The other group comprises of those few men who dare to comment or act against the social norms or at least have the capacity to change themselves – they have visions, courage and the special quality to re-judge any situation, any person and self. Section (B) of Chapter Three brings out such male characters of the novels of Austen and Eliot who bear uncommon traits in them and are therefore noticeable.

Lastly, Chapter Four is an attempt to understand how the narrator entails the network of social relationships in the novels. In two sections, this chapter focuses on the man-woman relationship and the familial relationships respectively. Thus, the chapter brings out the parallel, contrasting and symbolic representations of relationships of the novels of Austen and Eliot that sometimes are given the main focus.

Eminent critics have discussed, analyzed and commented much about the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot from different angles. Still the novels have more in their world to be explored and enjoyed. Moreover, every re-reading of the novels takes the reader a step deeper into the story-world. It is true that the plots and settings of their novels record the flavour of a certain age, which is not familiar to the readers of our time. However, this did not stand in the way of their being read year after year down to our time. For one thing, both Jane Austen and George Eliot have worked with basic human feelings and attitudes. The regional aspects are only the colours the novelists have used to draw their picture. Both the novelists have developed plots that capture human attitudes from different levels. On the wider level, they have described society from the point of view of a woman as a social being. On an individual level, men and women are portrayed in relation to themselves, again from a woman's point of view.

Jane Austen and George Eliot have always believed in their observation and on their thoughts and feelings. Their novels are the result of their life experience. Terry Eagleton has said, "If the intellectual is typically in pursuit of the whole picture, the woman is perhaps more likely to be responsive to the claims of feeling and local experience" (170). In every case, the common thoughts of Jane Austen and George Eliot that are reflected in their novels, especially through their narrative voices and through their choice of themes and subjects, are perhaps the

fundamentals of female minds, and, the aspects that differentiate their readings of both women and men probably signify the general differences that exist between two writers and two females as individuals.



## CHAPTER ONE

### SOCIETY AND ITS CRITICS – JANE AUSTEN AND GEORGE ELIOT

The authoritative power has its existence in and command over the structural parts of the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot. The temporal and spatial structures play a significant role in shaping up the meaning in these novels. The overall plot-construction – selection of scenes, ordering of sequences, mimetic and diegetic representations – everything is indicative of the authorial implications, which are given the appropriate stress through the narrative discourse of the novels, which again mobilize the readers to respond in the suggested way to a certain extent.

Both Austen and Eliot appear to be conscious of the fact that the invisible power of social rules and customs is always at work and acts as a dominating force in every aspect of the lives of those who are dominated. It is not so easy to judge a person without taking into account his or her social situation. Therefore, in their portrayal of human actions, Jane Austen and George Eliot mirror social influence almost to the extent of personifying it.

Zooming into the novels of these two authors, the readers can experience that there are two sides in each of their novels, and these two sides, like the protagonist and the antagonist in a typical tale, face each other. On the one side, it is the ever-controlling social power, and on the other, it is the people living in the social structure. From this perspective, the realistic and society-oriented novels of Austen and Eliot are social criticisms that show how much profoundly the social customs and concepts renovate the individual self. The sequences of events represent the interaction of human beings, when the central focus is upon women's situation in the society. However, several women novelists have inputted social criticism in their novels; for example, Charlotte Smith, in some of her novels,

criticizes aspects related to government, or Revolution in France, or even the structure of England. This happens to be more a critical outlook upon happenings of a particular time and place, which lacks any suggestion or indication of the general system for the reform of mankind. Contrastingly, both Austen and Eliot's criticism is about the social structure in general. For which perhaps, Austen has excluded any political affair like Napoleonic wars, or criticism about legal system. On the other hand, Eliot has included historical facts and figures in some of her novels merely to present glimpses of public life – the focus in every case has been upon the matter of individual's involvement in public or political life and not the political happenings. This means that the matter of concern in Austen and Eliot's novels has been the individual's relationship with the social structure that involves both women's situation and human situation in general.

Though the subject of concern is the same, the novels of Austen and Eliot project the social situation from different angles and in different ways. The difference lies in their way of narrating a situation, in their way of focusing upon a setting, and in their selection of scenes. And, the ideological closure, the endings of their novels deliver the authorial message differently: Austen's is her suggestion of a possible solution to a problem and Eliot's is her final realization about the possible outcome of a situation. Moreover, the difference in the narrative structure of the novels of Austen and Eliot is quite noticeable. When the narrator in Jane Austen's novels introduces a situation, the stress is on the actions of the characters and the tone of the narration reflects whatever implications the specific situation bears. Only some short comments from the narrator are included occasionally to create the link between scenes and to direct the readers' attention in a specific way. Added to this, the scenes and situations of Austen's novels have a surprising quality of relating to the readers' experience irrespective of the latter's age and

society. Therefore, the narrative does not need to include any analysis of a specific situation. It is not that the scenes of George Eliot's novels do not highlight an action, or cannot relate to the readers' experience, but Eliot's way is to maintain a direct communication with the readers. The authorial voice in her novels is ever present to discuss, comment, and generalize a situation, which Karen Chase explains as a device "...to subordinate description to explanation" (*Eros and Psyche* 139). To some extent, Eliot controls her plots and the actions of her characters to visualize her own-felt philosophy of life; she even guides her readers to understand her philosophy better. The narrative of her novels includes passages that disclose her profound thoughts on a situation without which the readers may not be able to figure out the inherent implications. Considering the readers' experience therefore, Austen's novels are more open to various interpretations from the readers' side than Eliot's novels because while the former motivates the readers to take certain situations of ordinary life into consideration, the latter guides to understand such situations from a philosophical and generalized point of view.

The situations of Austen and Eliot's novels are enactments of the authorial observations – the two authors have reproduced in their novels those instances that they have experienced in their lives, to show and sometimes prove their assumptions in this respect. For this, Austen uses inductive method, i.e., she begins with specific observation and detects common patterns and regularities of social behaviour that eventually lead to the construction of general conclusions about the social situation. She reproduces some commonplace instances in her novels from which she proposes a general situation – it is the derivation of general principles from specific instances. On the other hand, Eliot uses the deductive method and moves from the general to the specific. She begins with a hypothesis that she



testifies through the instances she presents in her novels. The conclusion follows necessarily from the premises presented in the novels.

However, as both inductive and deductive reasoning eventually come to a conclusion, Jane Austen and George Eliot, in the same way, come to their own conclusions about a prevailing social situation, which declares in different expressions the same proposition that there is no way to come out of the social dominance. Therefore, the consequence is that both the authors though are concerned about a particular region or society but their criticism implies the general situation of individuals of any society. The narrative stress is therefore not on the regional characteristics in the least, but on the basic and elementary aspects of social living. In all these novels, the authorial concerns related to social structure and the social beings are fundamental issues of life and thus the plots of their novels tend towards universality.

### **(A) From the Domestic Point of View: Jane Austen**

The narratives of Jane Austen's novels limit the sequences of actions within the domestic sphere. The plots incorporate familial life. The plots do not include any scenes from the outer world, and there is no reference to happenings in the political world. The narrative discourse revolves round various family matters, some of which are trivial and some important. The focus is upon those simplest to most complex situations and events that reflect certain characteristics of the domestic society the author is annoyed about.

The scenes of the novels of Jane Austen project the general domestic atmosphere of the English provincial society while placing women's actions at the centre; the series of sequences show women's performance in their social life – how women react to social issues and interact with others in different

circumstances. On the whole, going through the novels of Jane Austen is experiencing domestic life and women's situation from a new light.

Two innovative aspects together make these novels new experience for the readers. First of all, the too much limited range of plots – the events centre on a family in each novel and show the situation and attitudes of the family members and their interaction with other families. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the focus is upon the Bennets, it is the Bertrams in *Mansfield Park*, the Woodhouses in *Emma* and so on. Also, the selected sequences show these families in their domestic life, excluding the external activities of the male members of the families.

Secondly, the whole domestic atmosphere is depicted through a narrator, who is undoubtedly a she – the one woman present in all the novels. This narrator plays a special role in portraying the domestic world. Technically, such a narrator is termed extra-diegetic, who seems to exist on a different narrative level from that of the story. But in essence, the narrator of Austen's novels appears to live within the same area she speaks about but she is never part of the actions of the novels. She is a keen observer, sympathetic, but a humorist, who seems to be present in every scene she depicts.

Usually, such narrators have the quality of being omnipresent, knowing and seeing everything all the time. However, in case of this narrator, though she is not directly present or involved in the action, her persona is established. This brings some limitations in the narrator's observations and she narrates only what she can observe as a woman of the time. This is why, the scenes of Austen's novels only cover places where women are usually present – the drawing rooms, parlours, dining-rooms, the lawns and the balls. This brings stableness in the narrative persona and consistency in the perspective from which she is narrating. Naturally, in the novels, there is no scene that focuses on a place where only men frequent.

such as business places, working places and so on. As the domestic sphere has been the women's world, focusing on those places women rarely or never tread would change the perspective of the novel and the presence of another voice other than the identified female voice would be marked out.

Yet, the narrative of Jane Austen's novels does not have the limitations of, for example, the narrative of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Written in the first person narrative, the novel has a homodiegetic narrator – the protagonist herself, telling her own story. Naturally the whole story is narrated from Jane Eyre's point of view. This character describes her own feelings, which she is aware of, but some feelings and emotions remain within the subconscious mind, of which Jane Eyre may not be aware of and therefore such feelings and emotions are not part of the novel. In addition, Jane Eyre herself tells her own story, which is a one-sided picture, and so neutrality of the description can be questioned. As a result, this novel, though narrated from the point of view of a female character, does not have the essence of the general female consciousness. On the other hand, Brontë's use of multiple narratives in *Wuthering Heights* involves narrators who are part of the action, which creates a confusion regarding the actual story and so the readers themselves have to decide whether the narratives of *Wuthering Heights* are justifiable or not. In this case, the story takes different shape from various readers' points of view.

Jane Austen uses her female narrator less as a person and more as a voice of female consciousness and conscience, who is not bound to any personal traits of human beings. Thus the narrative comes out of the barrier of personal thoughts and judgements and works from the fundamental feelings of women. Readers can identify the narrative voice in three different ways: sometimes as the storyteller, sometimes as the implied author, or the authorial voice or the mouthpiece of the



author – in whatever terms it is identified, and in some other times as the narrator of a certain character's mind.

Andrew H. Wright, while discussing the "narrative management" (46) of Jane Austen's novels, identifies "six characteristic points of view" (47). However, the three types of narrative of Austen's novels mentioned earlier cover the six categories of Wright. In the first category, which Wright calls "The objective account," "she [Jane Austen] poses as a neutral observer, as the silent member amongst those present, recording facts and disinterested impressions from what she is witnessing" (47). Wright's fifth category "Dramatic mode" refers to Austen's use of mimetic and diegetic presentations together as these two categories are part of the narrative in which the narrator acts as a storyteller. Then, the second category: "indirect comment," the third category: "direct comment" and the fourth category: "The universally acknowledged truth," which is "related to personal and impersonal intrusion by the author is her penchant for sprinkling maxims in her works" (77), refer to the authorial intervention in the novel. On the other hand, the sixth categorization of Wright is "interior discourses" through which "Jane Austen allows us to see within the minds not only of her heroines but of many other characters as well" (84). Critics praise Austen's method of internal focalization to interpret the characters' mind in her novels. Adela Pinch in her Introduction to the Oxford World Classics Edition of *Emma* writes, "Her [Jane Austen's] cultivation of this mode of representing her heroines' minds has made her novels crucial to the history of the English novel, markers of a moment when the novel as a literary genre perfects its inward turn, and begins to claim human psychology as its territory" (xviii). The combination of the female third person narrator and the female author has made the interpretation of especially the female characters' minds more preferable.

Taking Austen's method of narrative representation in her novels into consideration, there is no long or detailed analysis of events, but only short descriptions and mimetic representations or dramatizations of some parts. Narrative flexibility is obtained through the use of free indirect discourse. The sequential series of events highlight the inherent tensions that prevail in the domestic world, while the main storyline is about a girl's performance in such a society. Thus, the narrative arrangement of these novels reflect the social situation from two levels – the general and the particular – projecting the fundamental issues related to social interaction and at the same time showing the effects of this reality upon a young woman. The particular situations of the life of a young woman forms the storyline in an Austen novel, but the themes, which have got the utmost importance in the novels, regulate the progression of events and so are dominant in the storyline. The themes consist of the elementary aspects of human beings, which are common to persons irrespective of regional settings. This predominance of themes upon the particular story always creates a scope for generalizing the situations portrayed in the novels.

From both the particular and the general level, the novels of Jane Austen acknowledge the many facets of the life of a social being, which the narrative sometimes describes in the common social tone – indicating some events numerous only to knock at the readers' mind the striking elements in the existing situation. Thus, every scene of Austen's novels is critical representations of social rules.

The narrative actions of these novels hint at the fact that at the core of domestic life is the people's concern for settlement. Financial stability is the other word for settlement in such social structure. For men and women the means to settlement is different. The basic requirement for settlement in case of men is a

good financial condition with a house or property by inheritance or acquisition. Inheritance of the family property is according to the established rules. Gary Kelly has done some extensive research on such rules of the time in her essay, "Education and Accomplishments." Kelly writes, "Stability of the family estate across generations was ensured by primogeniture, or inheritance by the first son (rather than division of the estate among all the sons or all the children), and by entailing the estate, in default of a direct male heir, on the nearest male relative" (252).

Yet, the narrative and the sequential actions of the novels of Austen revolve round the complications related to women's settlement. Several sequences highlight the matter that women do not have chance of acquiring property by inheritance. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, every action of the Bennet family is based on the underlying concern related to settlement as the Bennet sisters cannot inherit their father's property, which will be entailed to Mr. Collins. Also, the lifestyle of women these novels bring out have no trace of women's activities outside the domestic sphere, which marks their inability to work outside and earn their living. For women therefore, as the sequences of events in these novels indicate, settlement is possible through a so-called successful marriage, which provides financial security. Thus matrimony and settlement have almost the same meaning for women. Miss Maria Ward in *Mansfield Park* marries Thomas Bertram and becomes Lady Bertram, and thus she "is raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income" (1).

Therefore, for a good settlement, marriage becomes the most important thing in woman's life, which, from a very early age, she learns to realize. Jane Austen's novels have a special focus on this aspect of a woman's life. The most common framework of the stories of Austen's novels is a girl's journey towards



matrimony that leads to her settlement and financial stability in life. The narrative highlights the special phase of a girl's life before marriage in a somewhat mocking tone. A girl, guided by her mother or other elderly women, prepares herself and performs according to the guidelines to catch the attention of a wealthy man. Even, different training institutions are established to provide such guidance and parents send their young daughters there. As intellectual education has been for men only, these schools with different curriculum focus mainly upon etiquette and artistic accomplishments like drawing, painting, piano playing and also reading English Literature and History. Mrs. Goddard's school in *Emma*, is such an institution, about which the narrator mockingly says, "... 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 little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies" (18). Also, apart from such formal training, young girls get advices from the elders to become an excellent wife – for example, Harriet is being trained by Emma "to be an excellent wife"; she has been given "a very good education from her, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting ... own will, and doing as ... were bid..." (30). In this way, noticeable portions of the narratives of Austen's novels focus on such quasi-educational scheme reserved for women in the society. The authorial implication behind such rendition of facts is that girls are only trained to be a good and submissive wife. The women cannot gain self-knowledge through such trainings. The frequent reference to women's guiding young girls and on the one hand, the girls' attentiveness to such training programmes on the other denotes the subdued attitudes of women under social repression.

One noticeable thing of the narrative arrangements of Austen's novels is that they reflect women's situation and the overall social situation at the same time

with significance. Though the central focus is on women's position and performance in the society, the narrative sequences cover men's domestic activities in relation to them. For example, in the beginning of *Sense and Sensibility*, the death of Henry Dashwood changes the situation for the Dashwood siblings but differently: the son, John Dashwood inherits the property while the sisters with their mothers remain dependant upon him, which reflects on the difference between men's and women's situation. Thus, the selected sequences of Austen's novels singularly or on the whole project the general social situation while exposing women's situation in depth at the same time. This enables the readers to experience the domestic conditions that the novels depict with clarity and transparency, comparing the women's side with the men's and also treating the social condition as a whole.

Coming back to the matter of matrimony, women, having no scope for settlement, consider marriage as a significant phase of their life that ensures their future settlement. For men, however, marriage comes second in the matter of settlement. Having "a good house and very sufficient income," Mr. Collins "intended to marry" (PP 114). He, like the other bachelors, listens to the "common report" and assesses its truthfulness, and, he finds out that "his plan did not vary" (PP 114). In any case, the sequences represented to signify the general social situation reflect the fact that the aspect of matrimony is wholly materialized; it has more become a deal between two persons to live together than a spiritual bond. From the quest for marriage to the final settlement, the characters perform the whole process mechanically.

One important part of such social practice is attending and arranging parties and balls. In Jane Austen's novels, there are many depictions and references to frequent parties and balls, many scenes focus on specific party occasions and the



narrative includes detailed information of the happenings there. This is not simply to highlight the events that take place in that domestic setting but to point out how much significance those parties and balls have in the lives of the inhabitants of that setting. Thus in *Emma*, there are references to at least six parties – Christmas Eve party at Randalls’, dinner party at the Coles’, the dinner party given for Mrs. Elton, the dance at the Crown Inn, the morning party at Donwell Abbey and the picnic at Box Hill. Such occasions interestingly and most importantly, make a scope for the handsome young men of fortune and pretty young ladies to meet and be acquainted to each other. People of the neighbourhood interact, and the elderly women attempt to introduce young ladies to wealthy and handsome men that, according to the common belief, leads to successful marriages. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the Meryton Assembly organizes at least one engagement between Mr. Bingley and Miss Bennet. The narrator states, “Miss Bennet was therefore established as a sweet girl, and their brother [Bingley] felt authorized by such commendation to think of her as he chose” (64).

Generally, people of the neighbourhood take special interest in these parties. The party sequences in the novels of Austen highlight women of all ages – very young, young, middle-aged and old – who seem to be more excited about such social gatherings than men. The young ladies remain eager to meet young men. In *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland attends such a gathering in Bath accompanied by Mrs. Allen. There, Catherine happens to be disappointed and uncomfortable in the beginning for not being able to dance. Afterwards, when she is “seen by many young men” (10), immediately, as the narrator records, the evening for her becomes more pleasant than before. She begins to feel “more obliged to the two young men for this simple praise than a true quality heroine would have been for fifteen sonnets in celebration of her charms” and so she goes



“to her chair in good humour with everybody, and perfectly satisfied with her share of public attention” (11). The narrator stresses on the importance of men’s admiration and “public attention” (11) in the life of a young woman, which brings her ultimate satisfaction.

Not only the party occasions, the narratives of Austen’s novels also highlight the preparatory attitudes and meetings and the after-effects of such occasions. The narrator puts the reader’s attention towards the reaction and response of the young ladies in this respect and show how obsessed and engrossed the young ladies remain with matters related to parties and balls they attend. The ladies spend most of the day preparing themselves for such an upcoming programme, or else enjoy talking to each other about the parties and balls they have just attended. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, “That the Miss Lucases and the Miss Bennets should meet to talk over a ball was absolutely necessary; and the morning after the assembly brought the former to Longbourn to hear and to communicate” (65). In other words, the authorial hint is on the fact that there seems to be nothing worthwhile in the lives of these young ladies to mention – they pass their time being dressed, attending parties, and gossiping about those events – an aimless life in the real sense. Though from the characters’ point of view, they are busy with their social performance.

Large part of the storyline develops from the sequences that focus on the frequent visits and re-visits between the families of the neighbourhood. Such repetitive events naturally signify them as the inevitable part of the social life. Added to this, the events are suggestive of the people’s involvement with social occasions. The sequential series of events of the novels of Austen show that family gatherings, visits and re-visits continue to happen, which each and every person of the society maintains with significance, sincerity and utter formality. In

*Persuasion*, the narrator focuses on the Musgroves: “The party at the Great House was sometimes increased by other company. The neighbourhood was not large, but the Musgroves were visited by everybody, and had more dinner parties, and more callers, more visitors by invitation and by chance, than any other family. They were more completely popular” (45). The visits and the re-visits between families happen so frequently that almost every chapter of a Jane Austen novel has some reference to any invitation of one to other. For example, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Chapter xiv refers to “The sudden termination of Colonel Brandon’s visit at the Park” (67); Chapter xv – “Mrs. Dashwood’s visit to Lady Middleton took place the next day...” (72). Chapters xvi, xvii and xviii deal with Edward Ferrar’s visit at Barton. In Chapter xix – “Edward remained a week at the cottage; he was earnestly pressed by Mrs. Dashwood to stay longer” (97) and Sir John, Lady Middleton, Mrs. Jennings bring Mr. and Mrs. Palmer with them to the cottage of Mrs. Dashwood (102); then the Middletons request Mrs. Dashwood and the three daughters to dine with them the next day – the carriage shall be sent for them (105-106). In Chapter xx – “... the Miss Dashwoods entered the drawing-room of the Park the next day...” (106). In Chapter xxi – “The Palmers returned to Cleveland the next day, and the two families at Barton were again left to entertain each other” (114).

Such detailed presentation of daily domestic livelihood of the provincial English people is apparently descriptive but more than that it is indicative of many problematic characteristics of such society. This is because so much communication and so much interaction between families of a neighbourhood, as the sequences of Austen’s novels portray, first of all, are not devoid of class-consciousness. Class divisions are mingled at the heart of the society and are noticeable in every sequence that highlights social interaction in the novels. People



of high rank or status show pride in their behaviour and derision in their attitude. The treatment of Fanny by the Bertrams at the beginning in *Mansfield Park* and the attitude of Catherine de Bourgh with Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* are two of those innumerable instances. On the other hand, the middle class struggle for social mobility and the underprivileged seek for patronization of the rich.

Also, strict rules of mannerism join with the rigidity of class-division to make the people of the society quite artificial. People's approach to each other is often characterized by a lack of warmth and expressiveness. The selected dialogues of the characters and references to people's comments on different social matters reflect on the characteristic artificiality and pretensions in conduct. From simple conversations to private letters – in every case, men and women use formal language. In cases when the conversations can be hearty and informal, they remain strictly well-mannered – that is, abiding by the rules of speaking. For example, the evening Elizabeth stayed at Netherfield for her sick sister, the narrator reports,

To the civil enquiries which then poured in, an amongst which she had the pleasure of distinguishing the much superior solicitude of Mr. Bingley's, she could not make a very favourable answer.... The sisters, on hearing this, repeated three or four times how much they were grieved, how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill themselves; and then thought no more of the matter; and their indifference towards Jane when not immediately before them, restored Elizabeth to the enjoyment of all her original dislike (*PP* 81).

Earlier, Elizabeth's hastily coming at Netherfield by foot not being according to the social manners is criticized by Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst. Miss Bingley thinks the act to be most unsocial and "...to be very bad indeed, a mixture of pride and impertinence..." (*PP* 81) and according to her, she has "...no conversation, not stile, no taste, no beauty" (*PP* 81). However, the Bingley sisters do not notice or realize Elizabeth's love and care for her sister Jane, which is the main reason of her coming all the way. Thus, interactions between families, interaction within a



family and between its members – everything, is regulated by the established rules that every person of that society believe in, which are too formal and full of pretensions. Real emotions and inherent wishes are repressed in favour of proper manners and etiquettes.

Thus, every page of Jane Austen’s novels reflects stark realism. Only focusing on the domestic sphere of a society, Austen elucidates the significant and fundamental tendencies of the social mind. She is able to highlight that part of the individual psychology that the social customs engender as well as the part that forms instinctually. In addition, Austen is able to detect the ways the social customs and rules stand against individual aspirations. Andrew H. Wright writes, “Jane Austen, though without any vehement renunciations, looks at man in the world and is deeply troubled by what she sees: a course and inadequate world with course and inadequate standards –” (27). Wright also points out “three levels of meaning” of Jane Austen’s novels. They are,

...first, the purely local ... Second, they can be taken as broad allegories, in which Sense, Sensibility, Pride, Prejudice, and a number of other virtues and defects are set forth in narrative form and commented on in this way. Third, there is an ironic level, and if Jane Austen’s novels be considered in this light, then one can regard the various incidents, situations and characters as implying something beyond what they embody, as symbolic rather than allegorical. (27)

This third level implication of Jane Austen’s novels is perhaps more significant than the representation of a setting in detail. The limited range of the plots helps to highlight the symbolic aspects of the novels. Otherwise, the storyline and the variations of the settings would have been more prominent than the inherent themes.

Then again, the endings or the narrative closure of Jane Austen’s novels are more suggestive and symbolic than realistic, which make them look like fairy-tale

endings: all the Bennet sisters are happily married, Emma realizes her faults and misconceptions and recognizes her love, Fanny is happily married to Edmund and becomes one of the Bertram family and so on. The narrative closure of Austen's novels visualize the message of the author, which is that a little revolt to retain individuality, and a little compromise can lead a person's life towards happiness. More than that, through the endings of her novels, Jane Austen prioritizes love in relationships. Perhaps, her scheme is to show some instances of reality that reflect lovelessness and lifelessness in lives, and side by side, through her chosen characters, prophesize that an individual should seek for and recognize true love because this is the way to peace and happiness of mind and society.

This is why, the novels of Jane Austen do not "strike us as female castle-building in the air,"(55) to use the words Sir Walter Scott has said while commenting on *Pride and Prejudice*. Scott justifies his comment when he identifies three reasons behind it:

First, Austen plays artful variations upon the immemorial Cinderella-story clichés which underlie her scheme. Second, this archetypal fable has of itself a real potency, it celebrates one of what Thomas Hood finely called 'the great human currents.' Third, there is a lot more to the work than 'just' the ideal romance of feminine wish-fulfillment which is its structure (55).

Truly, the novels of Austen can be interpreted from various levels. First of all, they are romantic stories with happy-endings on the surface level. Secondly, they are regional novel depicting all the characteristics of the place realistically. Thirdly, they are renditions of universal human situation with a special focus on women.

Though the format and the structure of the novels are used by other writers as well, Scott indicates that Austen's use of old structural format of novels with the happy ending scheme has been delivered with variations. Firstly and most importantly the change is in the narrative voice and perspective – Austen projects the domestic



sphere from the female point of view. Secondly, the structural parts are arranged according to the demand of the authorial voice. While, comparing Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* with Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*, A. Walton Litz though identifies some similarities between these two novels, he himself figures out that Austen is different from Burney and the novelists working in the same form of fiction. This is because, Austen has dealt with almost the same subject and form in a new way or rather in her own way – from the female perspective. Litz maintains, “Since the limited social world she observed had been the subject of so much previous fiction, she was prevented from seeking originality in new situations and new locales. Instead she had to find her voice within the same range of life explored by many other female writers” (101). In one sentence, Litz points out the uniqueness of Jane Austen's writing style, when he says that it is “the discovery of new possibilities within a traditional form” (101). An examination of Jane Austen's novels bears out Litz's argument. Moreover, both Scott and Litz maintain that Jane Austen has been able to convey new implications using the same old traditional set-up of novel. And, most importantly, she is successful in delivering her thoughts from the female point of view.

### **(B) Focus on Community – George Eliot**

In the novels of George Eliot, authorial intention is transparent– first and foremost because of the techniques of authorial intervention and the narrator's interpretive functions used. For example, in *Middlemarch*, the implied author directly addresses the readers and declares: “I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe” (117).



This revelation makes clear certain points related to authorial intention. Firstly, the narrative arrangement will create a particular web; secondly, development of the plot will reflect the destination of the human lots; thirdly, the series of sequences of the plot will show how these human lots are woven and interwoven.

The reference to web indicates a complex structure in which the lots of human beings are interwoven and intertwined. In the light of this authorial comment, it can be observed that the narrative sequences of novels reflect on the action and destination of human beings or rather social beings in relation to society, which has the major influence upon human lives. Therefore, this web is indicative of social structure.

Every George Eliot novel focuses on a certain community that represents the social structure. To successfully do the task of “unravelling certain human lots” (117) as declared through authorial intervention, Eliot has always taken a whole community for experimentation in her novels. Whether it is the provincial town of Middlemarch, or the calm village of Raveloe, or the politically sensitive Treby Magna, or a remote place of Florence, George Eliot illustrates the community, if not in details, but in a manner that illuminates the chief characteristics of that setting – the intention however, has always been to explore the various phases of human interaction.

Every novel of George Eliot presents a communal view, with series of sequences that together reflect on the main currents of the place or setting. In this connection, one other authorial declaration that is part of the novel *Adam Bede* is worth notifying:

“...I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as

precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath” (163).

The authorial intention is to give a faithful account of reality, which is based on the author’s own experience and observation – which may be inconsistent and ambiguous as reality is in the human eye.

The series of events of Eliot’s novels mirror simply reality without any attempt to make things seem better and more interesting than they are in reality. The focus mainly is upon the common lifestyle of ordinary or non-famous people of a society, though some historical figures are included in one or two of her novels. This authorial attempt to highlight the ordinary lifestyle of different social setting is not to show the differences between them but to indicate the commonness within them. The common pattern revolves round the problem between social predominance and individual suffering.

The selection and arrangement of the sequences in every novel of Eliot is based on the authorial proposition that social restrictions and regulations work as a barrier between individual aspirations and fulfilment. The scenes, the narrative, the dialogues of different characters and the overall plot – everything is arranged, ordered and formatted to exemplify this basic authorial ideology. For this, Eliot follows a deductive method – she proceeds from a general statement and working through several instances to get specific conclusions and thus identifying new structure of relationships within her created world. She obtains her understanding by making a mental link from the general principle or concepts she believes in to particular examples. This is why, the thematic structure of the novels control the plots and narrative arrangement and the selected scenes of Eliot’s novels are arranged in that order.

The human actions projected in the novels of Eliot are common, ordinary and unnoticed activities yet they together reflect the inherent nerves of human existence pointing out the basic tensions working within every human living. The untold pains, sufferings, and agitations of human minds, whose profundity cannot be measured in any yardstick, can create many intense reactions in the human being. Still these emotions are never recognized, though they are part of every human being. The author raises her voice for these emotions:

...there is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry of murder; robberies that leave man or woman forever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept secret by the sufferer – committed to no sound except that of low moans in the night, ... Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear.” (*Felix* 6).

Eliot searches for this within the simplicity of village life, in the wilderness because “The thorn bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them. (6)”.

As follows, the novels of George Eliot explore such human histories that are not recorded as history because they are rather considered as unhistorical acts. In parallel to this, facts and figures truly part of the recorded history are included in some of Eliot’s novels. This mingling of reality or fact with fiction has a number of functions in Eliot’s novels. First of all, the historical facts – those specific events of an age that may have special characteristics, that are publicly known – basically because successfully or unsuccessfully, they influence the entire social system – always influence and at times motivate the private world of the common people. Therefore, including the historical facts and figures within unhistorical matters create an effect of contrast – contrast of intensity and calmness, complexity and simplicity, materialism and spirituality. Secondly, including the historical facts



enables the author to project the public or the political world, which is part of the community too. Eliot shows how the many conceptions, the changes, the new methods and belief-systems – everything that happens in the political arena has a major influence upon the social life. Thirdly, there are people in the community, who lead a different life from others because they are directly related to the public or political world. By including the historical facts, the author takes the opportunity to show their private life. In *Romola*, Eliot directly introduces the historical figure Girolamo Savonarola – and the atmosphere of Renaissance Florence. By creating that time with her fictional characters in it, George Eliot shows the real effect of the concepts conveyed by Savonarola among the individuals through Dino and mainly Romola. Again, *Felix Holt* is set in a manufacturing town at the time of the Reform Bill of 1832, and written during the run up to the second Reform Bill of 1867. In this novel, the author specifically focuses on the personal lives of those individuals directly involved in politics – the Transomes. For example, the relationship between the Transomes and the Debarrys are dependent on their political beliefs. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot changes her intention; she focuses on the common life to view the indirect influence of the political atmosphere upon it. That is why, as Welsh says, “The historicism of *Middlemarch* is diffuse, neither forced nor narrowly focused. It provides perspective – forty years have passed since the first Reform Bill ... The treatment of politics is far more relaxed than *Felix Holt*” (62). Political factors remain on the background of this novel, though this insertion of fact in fiction strengthens the matter of realism in the novels. Alexander Welsh in his essay “The Later Novels” points out about some of George Eliot’s protagonists or rather title characters, who are “...like the male heroes of Scott, would not only live out her own story but serve as witness to the historical events of her era” (59). Anyhow, the basic

intention of Eliot has always been to reflect upon the fundamental actions of the individuals living in society and to explore the philosophy behind the social situation.

The narrative voice in the novels of George Eliot narrates from two levels. Sometimes it is the voice of a female who is one of the inhabitants of the society, aware of every bit of being a woman. At other times, it is the voice of the soul, transcending the barriers of gender and becoming a philosopher, generalizing on the lot of mankind as a social being. In such a position, the voice does not remain a she, but not a he either; which is frequently referred to by critics as a masculine expression. This is the level of female consciousness that leaves femininity behind and only works from the consciousness of being human. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth also identifies “two complimentary voices: a personalized voice familiar to her readers for its epigrammatical wit, and a narrator that acts as nobody, supervising the transmissions backwards and forwards between past and present” (222). In support of Ermarth’s division, Karen Chase gives examples. According to her, the difference can be seen by the use of “I” and “We” in different occasions. The “I” “works to defend personality from the moral absorptions of public conformity” and “we” “works to protect the community from the temptations of egoism.” She also adds, “because these functions are so clearly distinct, because the narrator turns so sharply from the cause of community to the cause of subjectivity, no unity can be sustained” (*George* 42).

As a matter of fact, no unity is expected either, because the focus in Eliot’s novels changes from the general to the specific – from human situation to women’s situation, also changes between two dimensions: private and public sphere. Sometimes the scenes depict the domestic sphere, focusing on the household matters and at other times, the sequences are arranged to highlight the common



concerns of the community. However, the scenes reflecting private life are linked with the scenes of public life to highlight their interrelatedness. This approach is at its best in *Middlemarch*, where Eliot depicts different family relations within a community by connecting the families in different ways in the middle of the novel. *The Mill on the Floss* reflects on the conflict between families. Altogether, through the series of events related to public or private life of individuals, the narrator-philosopher explores the common problems and concerns of the society.

However, there is always a place in the novels of George Eliot for the domestic scenes. The author focuses on the fireside of Mrs. Patten and "...her bright copper tea-kettle, the home-made muffins glisten with an inviting succulence" (*Amos* 7), portrays the events within Mr. and Mrs. Poyser's house, records intimate conversations between the two sisters, Dorothea and Celia, observes the lonely hours of Romola in her house with her father Bardo de Bardi, and even detects the lonely hours of the dejected and anxious Mrs. Transome in her room and so on. The narrator in every case is no one else but an inhabitant of the place she depicts.

In every case, the authorial propositions and concerns related to social situation form the thematic structure of the novels of Eliot upon which the storyline is built. In other words, the storyline is not as prominent as is the thematic pattern of the novels – the themes enwrap the whole story. As a result, the novels do not have a common pattern or structural discipline, which critics sometimes point out as the lack of unity and order. However, the unity is in the thematic structure that remains inherent in the storyline and as a result, the outward actions of the novels surely project a kind of disunity and inconsistency. According to Barbara Hardy, "... the apparently rambling and circumstantial expression of her spirit has its own



formal principles” (2). One of the most recent commentators of George Eliot’s novels, Tim Dolin, shows the narrative in another light. Dolin writes,

In all the novels, George Eliot’s narrators adopt a broadly scientific approach, at once practicing and enjoining their readers to practice empirical techniques such as close observation, comparison and prediction, and applying forms of reasoning more usual in the laboratory. (191)

He figured it out as a “heuristic endeavour” (191). In whatever light it is seen, the themes unite the scenes in the novels; the plot or the plots on the other hand, are presented as instances. Comparison and prediction are done while developing the scenes of the plots. And finally the whole novel is bound in the reasoning of the authorial voice.

The serialized, systematic and consistent thematic patterns of the novels control the sequential series of scenes and actions, of which disunity is one of the significant themes. Yet, the disunity among the scenes that seems to be present in the novels of Eliot has another implication too. It is reality that shows – it is the disunity that lies within the seeming unified whole called society. The narrator of Eliot’s novel has never intentionally broken the unity of the storyline. Also, the narrative has its own chronology in the sense that it represents images of reality. It is not centred upon one event or one individual but upon several to show the sameness in the struggles. For example, in *Middlemarch*, Dorothea’s and Lydgate’s story being the major ones, there are minor stories like Bulstrode’s and Fred’s, all of which lead to the same reflection of being in the society. However, the serial of the thematic pattern and the development of storyline never collide with each other. Michael M. Boardman says, “Eliot’s fictional form is an idea-charged realism, a thematically dense medium that nevertheless uses ideas without letting them displace the concrete story” (111).

Yet, the effect of disunity or conflict remains one of the major themes of Eliot's novels. The sense of conflict and discord prevail in every part of the society. There are various divisions and diversions within the community, all of which create the effect of disunity – this is crystallized through “the panoramic eye of the narrator” (Chase, *George* 37). The divisions have grown from various conflicts, and co-existence of different beliefs and concepts. The traditional and the new, simplicity and complexity, honesty on the one hand and dishonesty in the shape of evils and wrongdoings on the other hand are present, social justice and moral justice, dependence and freedom – Eliot focuses on all these aspects in her novels that co-exist and remain face to face in the community. For example, Eliot shows the Methodists and the traditional believers face to face in *Adam Bede*, old medical method and new medical method confronting each other in *Middlemarch*, and Whigs, Tories, Dissenters and Radicals head to head in *Felix Holt*. Sometimes, such divisions and diversions effect family-relationships. The relationship between the Transomes and the Debarrys is based on their political beliefs and when Mr. Debarry finds out that Harold Transome has become a Radical and left the family party, Mr. Debarry for a time being breaks the relationship with the Transomes. Again, when Dino becomes Savonarola's follower, it effects the relationship between the father and son – Bardi and Dino.

However, the ultimate conflict in society, as Eliot shows in her novels, is between individual choice and desire versus social norms and regulations. “The individual's power of choice and self-direction in the face of defining and constraining socio-historical circumstances” (Roberts xiv) has been one of the most sustaining themes in the novels. Various critics have pointed this out in their discussion of different novels of George Eliot in various ways. R. T. Jones says about Maggie's situation: “... the conflict between, on the one hand, individual



impulse – all that makes Maggie Tulliver unique – and, on the other, the loyalties and obligations that she has incurred, more or less involuntarily, that have descended upon her” (19). George Eliot tries to capture the “... experience of struggle, of conflict between the inward impulse and outward fact, which is the lot of every imaginative and passionate nature” (*The Mill* 280). Jones says about *Middlemarch*, “... a central theme of the novel is the complexity of the relationships between the exceptional individual and the ordinary society in which he lives” (64). Thus, in every case, there seems to be two sides – the individual and the society. Though the society is made for and by the individuals, the long established, strict social attitudes often make the individuals their opponents. The web Eliot refers to indicates the power of society that weaves people together in commonness, at the cost of individuality.

The individual who dares to step beyond the common established rules and concepts, naturally face the obstructions created by the society. Even this happens with the individual who nourishes an ambition in him or her – like Lydgate, Dorothea, Romola or Felix Holt. The problem is not in the meaningfulness of their ambitions, but in their wish to do something by themselves apart from being a passive member in the society. As these individuals want to do something uncommon and unexpected, society severely criticizes them.

The problem of individual freedom, as Eliot’s novels show, is more intense in case of women in society. The narrator in Eliot’s novels, when appears to be one of the women of the community, concentrates on the social influence on certain aspects related to women’s existence. Women’s social state is pointed out from the interactions of women in the community. The narrator exemplifies the training of women as socially accomplished. “Mrs. Lemon’s school, the chief school in the country, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished



female – even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage” (*Middlemarch* 79) represents places where women learn to be accomplished. These trainings lead to their domestication and uproot any chance of having aspirations to be enlightened and educated beyond a limit. Tim Dolin comments, “To advocate higher education for women, allow them entry into full-time paid work in the professions or in business, permit them financial freedom and property of their own or the power to take legal action or enter Parliament, represented a threat to the entire social system.” (73) George Eliot re-represents such a harsh reality in her novels. The constraint in women’s education has been a great concern for the narrator. There are a number of scenes in Eliot’s novels that reflect on women’s obstructions in the society. For example, Mr. Tulliver’s inner soul rejoices in his daughter’s intelligence, while his social being asserts, “... a woman’s no business wi’ being so clever; it’ll turn to trouble, I doubt”. A well-reputed woman is submissive and not more bright or intelligent than required like Celia, Rosamond and others, because “...an over-‘cute woman’s no better nor a long-tailed sheep – she’ll fetch none the bigger price for that. The same remark comes from Mr Brooke, according to him, “Young ladies don’t understand political economy...” (*The Mill* 13). In a couple of lines, the authorial voice projects the situation best in *Middlemarch*, “Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them” (7). These “sane people” (7) are the majority in the society, who maintain sanity to their level best more than any other issues, sometimes turn a blind eye to a close and intimate relationship. Social conceptions and obligations have prominence even upon close intimate relationships. This happens in case of the relationship between Tom and Maggie in *The Mill on the*

*Floss*. The brother so close to Maggie can ignore his love for the sister and do what appears to be right in the eye of society. "A truly respectable young man, Mr Tom Tulliver, quite likely to rise in the world!" (504) in other words, a young man who has the ambition to become successful in the social world, cannot bear "his sister's disgrace" (504). The narrator remarks with anguish, "It was to be hoped that she would go out of the neighbourhood – to America, or anywhere – so as to purify the air of St. Ogg's from the taint of her presence, extremely dangerous to daughters there! (504). This is how, right from the family members to the whole community, an individual is condemned when he or she breaks the social barrier. "...a young man of five and twenty is not to be too severely judged in these cases," (503) but in case of a woman, the punishment is the strictest that could be. Justice is influenced by social 'mind-set', popularly known as 'morality', which actually is devoid of any moral consideration. Right and wrong are measured upon the yardstick of social rules – social conventions approve certain attitudes, which are strictly maintained – which when violated, a severe punishment is determined. Religious sentiments and conceptions cannot always interfere into these rigorous regulations. Dr. Kenn informs Maggie, "...the ideas of discipline and Christian fraternity are entirely relaxed; they can hardly be said to exist in the public mind; they hardly survive except in the partial, contradictory form they have taken in the narrow communities of schismatics"(507).

George Eliot analyses this problem further by putting instances from the public and domestic world. In *Felix Holt*, for example, Mrs. Transome manages all the affairs before her son, Harold comes back. But in the matters of elections or any public interactions, Mrs. Transome is totally left out of the matter as she is a woman. Moreover, "Harold Transome seems to be the spokesperson" (Bode 771) for the restrictions of womankind. Harold, as majority of men, prefers to see



women at home. Even Casaubon, who appears to be an enlightened man, simply wishes for a submissive wife like any other men of the society.

Yet, the house has been women's world – they have their little dominance within this sphere as it is presented in George Eliot's novels. In *Middlemarch* the narrator remarks, "The old lady was evidently accustomed to tell her company what they ought to think, and to regard no subject as quite safe without her steering" (140). Perhaps, these are mere reactions to the actual constraints the women face – may be her steering develops from her urge to steer the society in the real sense. In this way, the narrator puts light on a number of problems and realities that have resemblances with any readers' experiences.

As the narrator of Eliot's novels renders various issues related to human existence in society, she shows them in different social structures. The use of different atmosphere and different circumstances in these novels proves the inevitability of the social influence in any type of society. The social beings are dominated by the social codes and conventions in the same way though every society has different regional characteristics, even the two villages – Raveloe and Hayslope have a lot of differences in them. Along with some communities of England, Eliot has also used places far abroad, in *Romola*. The intention behind this is that Eliot has selected various communities, each of which has a certain aspect prominent and pervasive in the atmosphere of the community. She highlights the most influencing social characteristic of the place which becomes a significant tool to motivate the individuals in a certain type of lifestyle. Sometimes, Eliot chooses to highlight one of many such aspects prevalent in the community – the main intention has always been to reflect the relationship between the society and the individual in different lights. For example, in *Felix Holt*, the concentration is upon the political factors – some traditional political divisions like Whigs and



Tories and side by side, some new tendencies and movements like Radicalism. Eliot shows how these aspects have not been confined in the political arena but have a wide-ranging influence in the whole community. In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot has tried to touch the religious mind of the society – the traditional Christianity and the arrival of Methodism and so on. In *Romola*, it is Savonarola's preaching highlighted against the previous dogmas.

While the narration goes on, one can feel that there echoes tones of anguish, hopelessness, and distrust in the novels of George Eliot. It is true that there is a sense of pessimism in the tone of the narrative in Eliot's novels and a feeling that it may not be possible to come out of the social restrictions. Still, one can feel in the narrator of every Eliot novel, there is a revolutionary zeal that flickers in the tone of the narrative and which engenders new energy within the readers' souls through the narrative. In this way, Eliot reinforces new energy if not new hopes for the readers. Otherwise, she would not make some of her chosen characters struggle to do something new or advanced. Yet she shows these characters as failures in the end of her novels only to raise the concern that the existing social rules must be changed.

In *Adam Bede*, there is a famous passage where the author-philosopher writes,

In this world there are so many of these common, coarse people, who have no picturesque, sentimental wretchedness! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes (166).

This is the writer's supreme wish – to observe reality with a keen eye to engender thoughts and philosophies based on actual existence of human beings. The philosophizing tone of the authorial voice is almost always present. But at the same time, one of the most surprising things about George Eliot's novels is that the

description and the story have never crossed the limits beyond which it may be called unreal. It is because, Eliot has always presented in her novels what she has observed and realized to be reality, and she has never depended upon any imaginative facts. Her focus has been upon the common men, the common lifestyle and the common everyday emotions. The authorial voice reveals her thoughts in another place of *Adam Bede*:

“There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can’t afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude ...” (201)

In this matter, there is similarity and difference between George Eliot and Jane Austen at the same time. George Eliot’s preference to everyday fellow-men may mean that she has wished to focus on the common, unimportant people and their life-style. Jane Austen has also wished the same though she has almost excluded the lower-class. Anyhow, the authors have focused on certain classes of people according to their choices but their basic intention has been the same. Both the writers have concentrated on exploring the fundamental causes of human emotions and feelings. George Eliot says in *Adam Bede*: “... let us love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy” (200). Perhaps this is the actual point where both the writers are most similar to each other. The first and foremost thing for them has been to explore the secret of deep human sympathy.

Common people, natural lifestyle, simple but fundamental human emotions and feelings – these are the aspects George Eliot has dealt with. Eliot has concentrated on those aspects of human life that other novelists usually do not get interested in. Eliot has chosen simple reality to fantasy, simple common lifestyle to complex situations. Karen Chase writes,



Much of the method of George Eliot can be understood as a reversal of Dickens's slogan, 'the romantic side of familiar things'. The goal of her narrative realism is often to demonstrate the familiar side of romantic things, to show how those exotic possibilities which we contemplate in idle fantasy depend on ordinary, matter-of-fact desires, motives and dispositions. (*George* 26)

To add with this, the method of George Eliot is also to envisage the philosophical side of the familiar things. Eliot has always delivered her philosophical outlooks on the causes and effects of fundamental human interactions. On the one side, this has made the particular situations of the novels general and universal and on the other side, this has helped the readers to understand the deep-rooted cause-and-effect relationship of every situation of their lives. Thus, George Eliot has been able to reach the common mind of the readers through her rendition of the common situations, feelings, and emotions of human life in her novels.

### **(C) Daily Events and the Storyline**

The novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot have always captured the flavour of life in general – life of average social beings, which does not always include sensational or uncommon events. Therefore, rare occasions and extraordinary or unusual stories of individual life, thrilling stories of two or more individuals or an individual's journey from struggle towards big success – these common formats of novels are never used in the novels of these two writers. Even the storylines of these novels do not include any stunning or shocking element. Considering the longitudinal structure of time and actions, the plots of these novels develop simply from the daily happenings and thus show how unspoken, insignificant and momentous flashes of life can make stories too.

In Jane Austen's novels, the narrative sequences monitor the daily proceedings of a certain family and show how people and especially women



maintain their social duties. Eliot's novels, on the other hand, capture the social atmosphere of a certain community though the focus is upon the daily activities of one or more than one family. While Austen's novels have always captured the domestic life of the provincial English town, Eliot's novels have different settings: sometimes provincial life, sometimes rural life and sometimes portrays remote place of Italy. In the last case too, the daily events are portrayed where the scenes include daily scene of marketplace, daily life of the character Romola and so on. Different types of settings highlight the contrast between different atmospheres and reflect on common elements of daily livelihoods of the social beings.

Anyhow, in the novels of both Austen and Eliot, the narrative progresses chronologically. The events of a day are shown to be related with the events of the preceding day. The storyline develops from such relation between daily events. In several parts of the novels, the series of sequences do not have any meaningful progression and thus produce an effect of monotony. On the other hand, sudden or uncommon happenings or surprising moments are not inputted systematically but rather abruptly placed in a specific part of the novel. Such events are present to produce sudden effects of awe, shock or joy, as it happens or occurs in everyday reality. Thus the uncommon events that break the monotony of daily life hints at the unpredictability and inconsistencies of everyday life the reality is full of.

Therefore, it may not be appropriate to mark these inconsistencies in different parts of their novels in a negative way though A. Walton Litz describes Austen's way of narrating the story sequentially as "inconsistencies in tone and point of view" (72). In this sense, the narrative of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is consistent in tone and point of view. The point is that in this novel, the narrator i.e. Jane Eyre herself, is telling her own story. Being active in the story, the narrator projects the daily events from her perspective only and the tone of the narrative

naturally remains subjective throughout. Also the narrator has selected to focus on those parts of daily life that take the story further and that she observes as a character of the story. There are places in the novels where she omits a week (Chapter Two of Volume Five) or a month (Chapter Seven of Volume Two) from her narration.

In contrast, Austen or Eliot's novel, first of all focuses on the daily lives of the place selected as the setting and uses both the description of the narrator-observer and the comments or feelings of certain characters to illuminate the real situation in a balanced way. In this case, the method is to present the sequential or consequent happenings of daily lives rather than projecting only the story-related sequences. Therefore, events indirectly related or not related can also be included in the novel and it is not surprising to see multiple stories too. This specific characteristic of the novels of Austen and Eliot have made them term inconsistent. However, consistency is on the theme and content of the authorial messages. Moreover, when the intention is to represent the different characteristics of daily life and model the series of sequences in the format of daily life, the storyline cannot be systematic and consistent in pattern as inconsistency itself is one of the characteristics of daily life.

Interestingly, projection of daily events of a specific time-span does not simply reflect the aspects of that certain limited time, rather cover the preceding and following time. Individual's anxieties about the coming days sometimes work silently in the mind in the midst of busy everyday life. Whenever, the individual get struck by any shock in the daily life, these anxieties become active, he or she try to assess his past and future together. For example, the narrator describes Adam's mental state after the death of his father, "While his muscles were working lustily, his mind seemed as passive as a spectator at a diorama: scenes of the past,



and probably sad future, floating before him, and giving place one to the other in swift succession" (*Adam Bede* 50).

Again, the emotional outpourings of the simple pattern of activities of a specific time span projects the general situation of living a social life. Moreover, projection of the daily domestic life gives the scope to monitor women's life-pattern. Both Austen and Eliot therefore have concentrated on the daily happenings of individual's life to form the storyline of their novels, though their approach is different from each other.

To begin with Jane Austen, chronological descriptions of the happenings of a family appear to be the most common pattern of her novels. The narrative follows the time and describes all the actions and events that take place in a house. For example, the narrator describes the events taking place chronologically in *Persuasion*,

The remainder of Anne's time at Uppercross, comprehending only two days, was spent entirely at the mansion-house, ... (119)

Charles was to return to Lyme the same afternoon, and his father had at first half a mind to go with him, but the ladies could not consent. (119)

They were indebted, the next day, to Charles Hayter for all the minute knowledge of Louisa, which it was so essential to obtain every twenty-four hours. He made it his business to go to Lyme, and his account was still encouraging. (120)

Anne was to leave them on the morrow, an event which they all dreaded. (120)

Such sequences project most usual happenings of family life, which includes simple anxieties, tensions and worries, easy feelings of love and care, little moments of happiness and so on. There is no hint of any major development in such parts of the storyline, which produces the effect of monotony.

Alternatively, the novels of Austen also include some sequences where the characters are observed to act a little differently from their usual approach. The scenes show how changes occur in the activities of the family members preceding



an important occasion like a party or a ball and the whole atmosphere gets life on a sudden. The narrator in *Mansfield Park* illustrates such a situation:

The ball was now a settled thing, and before the evening a proclaimed thing to all whom it concerned. Invitations were sent with dispatch...(229)

The preparations meanwhile went on, ...Sir Thomas gave orders and Mrs. Norris ran about...(230)

Edmund could not ... think very much of the evening,...

Thursday was the day of the ball: and on Wednesday morning, Fanny, still unable to satisfy herself, as to what she ought to wear, ... She met Miss Crawford...(232)

On reaching home, Fanny went immediately up stairs to deposit this unexpected acquisition (236)

Having regulated her thoughts and comforted her feelings... she was able,... to go down and resume her usual employments... (240)

Thursday, predestined to hope and enjoyment, came;... (240)

Thus, the novels input two types of actions in the daily lives: one is that of unimportant or uneventful days, and the other is that of those days preceding a special occasion.

Usually, the daily happenings of the families depicted in Austen's novels have three parts. One, and the most interesting is the description of the grand parties and balls and the related actions that involve the characters' preparation and enjoyment of them. Two, the narratives highlight the visits and re-visits of families for breakfast or dinner, where the characters meet and make new acquaintances. Three, the narrative focuses on the time at home, when the characters discuss the reflections of the social interactions besides the daily tasks.

Generally, the narratives of the novels of Austen are arranged with such scenes of daily life that sequentially outline the storyline. These scenes include trivial and serious emotions and expressions, various actions and reactions of the characters. representing emotions and attitudes chronologically enables the reader to detect the cause-and-effect relationship of the actions. Though Austen has frequently explored the mental states of the characters of her novels, the innermost

feelings are not always clarified – only there is an abstract hint on the stimulus that enforces the individual to act in a certain way. In *Emma*, for example, especially in the first half of the novel, the narrator highlights the expressions, actions and reactions of Emma but does not put light on her inner thoughts and subconscious mind. In the last part, after Emma begins to realize her faults, the narrator describes her inner feeling of guilt that works in every stage of her actions.

However, George Eliot not only presents emotions and expressions of the characters but also penetrates into the complexities of emotions with in-depth analyses on them. This is a significant part of her novels. About Eliot, it can be said that she has presented daily emotions rather than daily events in her novels. The plots of her novels do not always follow consecutive time sequence though the events are narrated serially. Her preference is upon the daily moods, the daily emotions that provoke daily events and the plots follow the same direction. Thus, the scenes of Eliot's novels are records of the different outpourings of human mind sequentially.

Eliot's novels represent the multiple emotions in the pattern they occur in the life of an individual, which is always different and apparently unaccountable. However, the selection of scenes and the serialization of the scenes hint at the cause and effect of a certain torrent of emotion. Thus the narrative arrangements of the novels of Eliot bring out different stages of the development of passion, the root of certain feeling and action and the possible consequences of action.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot shows the development of passions in a parallel way through two main parallel plots. Dorothea and Lydgate being the two main characters of the two parallel plots, the developments take place according to their similar emotional situations. Firstly, it is the part of aspiration, which Dorothea wants to gain through her marriage with Casaubon and Lydgate wants to gain by



research on medicine. Secondly, Dorothea and Lydgate face the obstacles – both struggle in their marital life. Lastly, both of them face their fate – they fail and their lives take a new uncontrollable way. The narrator, as the observer of the minds, chronicles every sequence that reflects Dorothea's and Lydgate's state of feeling. For example, the narrator describes a significant realization and a sudden change of feeling in Dorothea in chapter twenty of *Middlemarch*: "Two hours later, Dorothea was seated in an inner room of boudoir of a handsome apartment ... I am sorry to add that she was sobbing bitterly," (160). Then, after some time, the narrator comments, "For the first time since Dorothea had known him, Mr. Casaubon's face had a quick angry flush upon it" (167). In this way, the novels of George Eliot reflect on the fact that little emotions gradually become profound and such distresses of everyday life add to strengthen the mind to react in an intense way.

Working with the complexities related to human emotions, Eliot has even monitored the acts that are considered sinful. An act of crime or an act of sin is not considered a separate or autonomous deed. It is the result of a number of consecutive actions the individual go through, that finally take the shape of a big action. To be more specific, behind each sin or crime, there are subtle but trivial daily emotions and their reactions, which finally lead to the big act of crime or sin. Karen Chase describes the same thing and shows how the same thing happens in case of Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*:

Bulstrode is the novel's strongest example of the slow disease that eats away moral character. The narrator repeatedly emphasizes the fact that one can point no single moment when Bulstrode turned from a life of principle to an act of crime. Instead he allowed himself a series of minor compromises and subtle lapses that the narrator shrewdly compares to a gradual relaxing of the muscles. The result is that 'the train of causes in which he had locked himself' (vi 61) works inexorably toward the murder of Raffles. (George 45)



Thus, George Eliot records the daily events in her novels to monitor the gradual and interrelated development of feelings, emotions, actions and reactions. The narrative plays a significant role in directing the readers to consider the core causes of even the simple emotions of daily lives. Contrastingly, Austen only presents the case studies – highlighting the different stages of emotional outpourings, without any analysis of those situations.

Perhaps, Austen projects simply the situation, with hints at the aspects of emotions, while leaving the part of interpretation and analysis for the readers. In Austen's novels, the narrator highlights the daily actions but her narrative does not always clarify the inner motives of actions. Only, there is an abstract hint on the stimulus that enforces the individual to act in a certain way. Pride makes Catherine de Bourgh act in that arrogant way towards Elizabeth, snobbery makes Miss Bingley behave and speak in that way. Weariness and anxiety for her daughters' future make Mrs. Bennet crazy and ridiculous. Thus, Austen shows how the social customs, rules, and regulations manipulate the simplest attitudes of individuals and motivate human interactions in their daily lives. However, through some instances of daily lives, Austen stresses upon the complexities of interactions between individuals in daily life.

There are many occasions in Jane Austen's novels too, where the author monitors the different mental states of the characters in their daily lives. For example, chapter one of volume two of *Mansfield Park* begins like this: "To the greater number it was a moment of absolute horror. Sir Thomas in the house! All felt the instantaneous conviction" (157). In the next chapter of volume two, the narrator writes, "Edmund's first object the next morning was to see his father alone, and give him a fair statement of the whole acting scheme," (168). The narrator depicts the state of Sir Thomas: "It was a busy morning with him" (171).

Then the narrator portrays the mental state of the family members in the evening: “The evening passed with extreme smoothness, though almost every mind was ruffled; and the music which Sir Thomas called for from his daughters helped to conceal the want of real harmony” (173). However, in such instances too, the stress is upon the complexities of interactions between individuals in daily life.

Also, as Austen has chosen the domestic sphere, there is a special focus on the daily lives of women in the novels. The narratives reflect the authorial anxiety on the state of women. The scenes of an Austen novel show that women remain busy interacting with the neighbours. The mothers and the elderly ladies are busy preparing and guiding their daughters; the young ladies dress up and attend parties, which seem to be the most significant work of their lives. Even Mary in *Persuasion* cannot stay to her sick son because she has “not dined at the other house since Tuesday” (56). Through the narratives and inclusion of such scenes, the authorial anxiety on the state of women of that time is reflected.

From one perspective, the novels of Austen and Eliot record the history of the daily life and livelihood of the people of their contemporary England. Jane Austen depicts the provincial life of that time, which is, as the author herself has hinted throughout the pages of her novels, simply unworthy, monotonous and aimless pretensions of livelihood. She also hints on the ways individual can rectify simple errors of self and lessen the bigger problems related to interaction. George Eliot has presented provincial life as well as rural life, with everyday details of butter-making, berry-picking, and cattle-herding, far away from the political and economic changes of an industrialized society. George Eliot shows how complexity resides under simplicity, crime and sin reside behind honesty and narrowness resides within a free-thinking person.

Thus, both Jane Austen and George Eliot have been able to sort out the source of the most complex situations regarding human interactions and relationships from the simple daily events. It is the simple attitudes and counter-attitudes that give birth to complexities that one does not take into consideration at first, but the most complex issues of human life regenerate from there. The more these two novelists have entered the arena of the everyday life, the better they have explored the central tendencies of human conduct.

#### **(D) Society and the Individual**

In almost all the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot, the drama is eventually between the society and the individual. As far as the individual is in concord with the pre-organized social frame, there is no scope for conflict, but those who dare to think or act against the social rules and customs have to suffer. Austen's novels show this conflict factually in women's case, which can also be interpreted as a conflict between society and the individual. This is because, these situations reflect the fundamental problem of retaining individuality as a social being. However, Eliot has separately presented this in men's case too in some of her novels to highlight on the generality of the problem along with stressing on women's position. To be specific, the character of Silas Marner and Daniel Deronda represent this fact from the level of human being only. This is one of the positive aspects of their authorial approach – the two authors put a special focus on the particular situation of women and at the same time project the general situation of individual living in the society that includes men's situation. As women perhaps, Austen and Eliot have felt the pain of social obstruction more than many of the male authors as women face more restraint than men in a patriarchal society. The two authors can sense that a feeling of being constrained by the social norms



affects the female mind and can understand that men are bound to follow the social regulations too; the difference is in the measure of strictness. On the other side, it is true that male writers have showed social oppression of women in their novels but have highlighted women's passivity only. Tess, in Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles* is simply shown as a girl of nature who becomes a victim of society. In this case, Hardy shows the absence of individuality only. The narrator here is an observer, scrutinizing from the outside the victimization of women. The society is not highlighted rather it is the three-fold conflict between simplicity, industrialism and nature. Contrastingly, the sequences of actions of Austen and Eliot's novels reflect the individual's inherent desire to retain selfhood through the female protagonists, while the minor characters project the loss of individuality. Romola in her early life has embraced and has innocently followed the teachings of her father. Also, she has truly loved Tito Melema. Up to this point, she has been guided by what she has confronted. But after struggling in her conjugal life and realizing the misdeed of Tito, Romola craves for peace and self-satisfaction. From then on, her earnest and intense passion for self-satisfaction of the soul has been the one strong force within her. Maggie of *The Mill on the Floss* too, from the very childhood, supports and attempts to enliven her self and soul in her own way. In contrast, Jane Austen's protagonists may not have that much boldness but they are aware of their own identity and they struggle to retain it. If it were not so, Elizabeth Bennet would have married Mr. Collins, and Fanny would have yielded to the proposal of Henry Crawford.

However, society has always regarded such attempts of an individual to retain individuality as rebellious deeds and judged it with a critical eye. In the novels of Austen and Eliot, the focus is upon the unstable situations that result from the conflict between individual's own desire and social expectations. Other

than that, a fine and stable social framework is always in the background. The conflict – which is not something like a visible war, but a silent mental disagreement of the individual – arises when the individuality of the individual is strong enough, but the social mind stands in contrast to the individual mind. In such a situation, the individual needs to be bold enough to face the troubles, because, in these cases, society begins to criticize the person's deeds in moral terms, social terms, and falsely, in religious terms too. Both Jane Austen and George Eliot seem to be thoughtful about such situations and in most of their novels, they have frequently placed ambitious individuals in front of the strict and conventional social structure to signify the conflict of society and the individual. In this pattern of social predominance, religion, which is the base of individual belief-system, cannot make a strong impact upon individual mind as the all-embracing influence of social rules take full place. Religious institutions, which are certainly expected to be independent of society, are motivated and to some extent controlled by the social power.

Therefore, the reality, as the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot show, is something like this: social influence passes on to the individual minds and the individuals receive it in various ways. Most of the individuals living in a society act silently and dispassionately because they take all the rules and customs imposed upon them as something natural but everyone cannot bear or overcome the inherent pressure developed from constraints. Individual attitudes and actions are often distracted due to severe domination of the social system, with society taking the role of a harsh punisher.

Overall, Jane Austen and George Eliot have been able to notify the social tools with which the abstraction of social power gets visibility and through which

society controls and regulates the individual minds and individual lives. The prospect of money is at the centre of these efforts.

### **1. Individual Controlled by Money and Property**

The prominence and influence of money and property in society have been commonly and inevitably present in any realistic or society-oriented novels of male or female writers. In political terms or social terms, every novel has presented the importance of money however in different ways and from different angles. Male authors have pointed out the influence of money in individual's life from a general viewpoint while women's fiction includes the particular relationship that women have with money and the specific connection between money and women's oppression. However, the novels of Austen and Eliot have a balanced presentation of the prospect of money in society as they focus on the general social situation and women's situation at the same time, which in turn make the authorial implications credible to both male and female readers. Presentation of the general and specifically women's situation together make the readers compare the two realities side by side.

Several instances of Austen's novels reflect on the general impact of money in society – at least one stage of the progression of storyline in each novel is determined by or related to the prospect of money. Or to say it another way, the prospect of money is observed to be at the basis of each novel's plot. For example, the fact that Mr. Bennet's property is entailed to Mr. Collins has an indirect but inherent influence on the further actions in *Pride and Prejudice*; Sir Walter Elliot's losing his estate in *Persuasion* has a similar effect upon the storyline. Again, two of Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park* and *Northanger Abbey* are titled by the name of the estate, upon which the central focus is put and around which the actions of



the characters mainly revolve. At the same time, these novels of Austen stressfully bring out women's relation with money or the impact of money in women's life. Edward Copeland in his essay, "Money" writes, "Austen approaches the subject, money, from three different, but related points of view. First, as a member of the pseudo-gentry, that is to say, the upper professional ranks of her rural society; second, as a woman in that society, severely handicapped by law and custom from possessing significant power over money; finally, as a novelist who joins other women novelists in a larger conversation about money" (133). The first two categories indicate the two levels of presentation – the general level and the specifically women's level – while the third category is the authorial part, which in reality maintains the balance between the general and specific projection. Similarly, Eliot's novels skilfully present the general situation of the individuals in consequence with the financial condition along with the specific focus on women's condition. In her novels, financial crisis is present in some place or other – the Tulliver family goes through financial disaster in *The Mill on the Floss*, the owner-worker relation in the Hall Farm in *Adam Bede*, or Fred Vincy's struggle for financial stability are some of the instances that portray the influence of money in the society.

Being in a social framework, the individual would inevitably feel the importance of money and property. From the positive angle, at least from the basic reason of the invention of money, it can be assumed that money happens to be a means of satisfaction in the lives of social being, and, money remains in the middle of wish and fulfilment. But reality, as recorded in the novels of Austen and Eliot, shows something else. Money and wealth appear to be one of the tools of society which influence, control and regulate almost all the phases of social life.

Women's relation with the prospect of money has been a complex one. The two authors critically portray the various effects the influence of money and property brings on the thoughts and perspectives of women. Also, the authorial stress is upon the unpleasant and difficult situations of women's lives that are directly or indirectly motivated by the prospect of money and property. In Jane Austen's novels, the narrative arrangements show how money influences women's conceptions, fulfilment of desire and even behaviour with others. The prospect of money and property works as the driving force to motivate women towards social preconceptions. First of all, the authorial observations proclaim that women learn to make an analogy between one's reputation in society and richness. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bingley becomes well-reputed in the eyes of Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Lucas and to the whole neighbourhood because of his wealth – he "...inherited property to the amount of nearly an hundred thousand pounds from his father"(63). Dorothy Van Ghent observes this in Jane Austen's novels,

Here a high valuation of property is so dominant a culture trait that the word "property" becomes a metaphor for the young man himself; and the phrasing of the sentence, with typical Austen obliquity, adds a further sly emphasis to this trait when it uses an idiom associated with the possession of wealth – "well fixed" – as a qualifier of the standing of "truth". (21)

The narrative hints at the fact that women especially use such "phrasing" (21) and the authorial implication is that money has replaced virtue – the rich or wealthy person gets more importance than a virtuous or meritorious person.

Secondly, the narrative actions demonstrate the analogy women learn to find between marrying a wealthy man and establishment or financial security. The focus is on two sides, the reality and the acceptance of reality. Austen shows the fact (as it has been discussed in the early chapters) that marrying a wealthy person is the only way for women to secure their future and establishment. Side by side,



the focus is on women's acceptance of reality – Miss Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice* accepts Mr. Collins “solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment” (PP 163). She confesses to her friend, Elizabeth, “I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home” (PP 163). Such instances reflect on the aspects the author is critical about. The unacceptability of reality is stressed through Elizabeth's rebellious conceptions. Elizabeth sums up that this is a sacrifice of “every better feeling to worldly advantage” (PP 166). However, commonly for women, as the narratives of Austen's novels reflect, the satisfaction is in the worldly advantage and the worldly advantage is in financial gain; Jane Austen narrates in *Mansfield Park*: “Being now in her twenty-first year, Maria Bertram was beginning to think matrimony a duty; and as a marriage with the Rushworth would give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her fathers, as well as ensure her the house in town, which was now a prime object” (32).

Also, the authorial stress is on the fact that men, especially who lack fortune, search for the opportunity to marry wealthy women or daughters of wealthy persons to secure their fortune. Hence, Mrs. Smith says to Anne in *Persuasion*, “Oh! those things are too common. When one lives in the world, a man or woman's marrying for money is too common to strike one as it ought” (198). Even, men break up engagements when the hope of financial gain decreases and thus the matter of money comes in between. Willoughby chooses a wealthy woman in place of Marianne for financial gain. Willoughby says to Elinor about his relationship with Marianne, “My affection for Marianne, my thorough conviction of her attachment to me – it was all insufficient to outweigh that dread of poverty, or get the better of those false ideas of the necessity of riches, which I was naturally inclined to feel, an expensive society had increased” (SS 316). The authorial implication firstly here is that money replaces love in the matter of



marriage or choosing one's life-partner and secondly is that women are subject to men's choice but not the other way, which is reflected in several instances of Austen's novels. For example, the Bennet sisters and the Lucas sisters attend the ball and they are beautiful options for Mr. Bingley to choose from.

Thirdly, from the psychological point of view, various instances of Austen's novels show how financial condition regulates women's behaviour. The wealthy owners of large properties have the awareness of being rich, and arrogance is therefore reflected in their behaviour. This is reflected in Emma and most prominently in Lady Catherine de Bourgh. When Harriet finally decides to reject Robert Martin's proposal on Emma's motivation, Emma says, "Dear Harriet, I give myself joy to this. It would have grieved me to lose your acquaintance, which must have been the consequence of your marrying Mr. Martin ... I would not have visited Mrs. Robert Martin, or Abbey-Mill Farm" (*Emma* 43). Here, Emma's expression signifies her awareness of being of a high class than the Martins, which makes the visit to the Martins impossible according to her. On the other hand, Lady Catherine de Bourgh in her conversation with the Bennets, for example, repeatedly points out the poor condition of the latter. She says, "you have a very small park here," and again, "This must be a most inconvenienced sitting room for the evening," (*PP* 362) and so on. Every comment of Lady Catherine signifies not only her awareness of being much higher in rank and wealth than the Bertrams but also her tendency to point out the poorer condition of the Bertrams in a humiliating manner. The reply of Mrs. Bennet is also significant because this reflects the most common behaviour of the middle-class towards the rich and aristocrats – always remaining submissive towards the latter. So Mrs. Bennet is "delighted to speak to a lady Catherine, (*PP* 362)" and she is "flattered by having a guest of such high importance" (*PP* 361). The scene is very significant in focussing on the interactions

between the wealthy and the middle class. The individuals like Lady Catherine de Bourgh who own property remain at the centre of the society under whom people with less or no wealth take shelter and from whom some get support. There are groups of individuals who always remain satisfied being under someone wealthy. Mrs. Norris in *Mansfield Park* seems to be quite satisfied living with her sister, Lady Bertram, who has become wealthy by marriage, while on the other hand, Mrs. Collins remains comfortable under Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Moreover, the poor welcome the patronization of the rich and the aristocrats very enthusiastically. For example, Fanny is sent to the Bertrams and thus, as Andrew H. Wright says, “comes under a shadow: that of charity, for she is taken by the Bertrams (and ostensibly by Mrs. Norris) out of pity for her mother who has produced eight children in eleven years and has another on the way.” (128) In such cases, the relationship between the patron and the patronized replaces familial relationship. Fanny has been treated coldly by the members of Mansfield Park. Even her first ball has been “without the preparation or splendour of many a young lady’s first ball” (*MP* 103). Also, the relation of Sir Thomas and Fanny is not simply of an uncle and niece but their status motivates their behaviour towards each other. For example, Sir Thomas advises Fanny “to go immediately to bed. (*MP* 245)” The authorial voice hints on the actual feeling: “‘Advice’ was his word, but it was the advice of absolute power,” (*MP* 245).

Such importance of money and property has created a strictly class-conscious social structure – the division between the inhabitants is mainly based on having or not having wealth, and also based on how they earn their living. Emma’s comment about the Martins bears some implications. Emma says,

A young farmer, whether on horseback or on foot, is the very last sort of person to raise my curiosity. The yeomanry are precisely the order of people with whom I feel I can have nothing to do. A degree



or two lower, and a creditable appearance might interest me; I might hope to be useful to their families in some way or other. But a farmer can need none of my help, and is therefore in one sense as much above my notice as in every other he is below it. (*Emma* 24)

The first part of this speech signifies Emma's awareness of class-division as she alienates her from the yeomen. The second part signifies Emma's interest in being useful to the classes lower to her own.

In a very detailed way, the novels of Jane Austen show how financial condition has a major effect upon the lifestyle of the individual, in which women are observed to be most affected. Jane Austen begins her novel *Sense and Sensibility* with the history of inheritance of wealth and property of the family of Dashwood. An inherent implication in this part of the novel is that inheritance of the property changes the lifestyle of the inheritor and the female members who are deprived of it. After the death of Mr. Henry Dashwood, the son, Mr. John Dashwood inherits the property and the situation has been such that the second wife of Henry Dashwood, with her three daughters moves to Barton Cottage from Norland. "In comparison to Norland" the Barton cottage is "poor and small indeed!" (26), still Mrs. Dashwood and her three daughters prepare themselves to adjust with the new life here. Because, as Mrs. Dashwood says, "one must not expect everything" (27). Yet, the Dashwood sisters in *Sense and Sensibility*, the Bennet sisters in *Pride and Prejudice*, and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* are "all at some point in their stories credibly threatened with the prospect of a life of real or comparative poverty" (viii) to use the expression of Adela Pinch. Financial instability has been the main reason behind much of the uncertain and unwanted strife of their lives.

Coming to George Eliot, the dominance of money in a society and the effect of it upon an individual are shown in her novels from a different light. The



sequential series of actions show the effect of financial condition upon individual's psychology. As wealth and property is related to material and mental satisfaction, the author senses that money has become so important in the society that having wealth and not having wealth make the individual mind react in different ways. For the same reason, those who possess wealth and property have a feeling of supremacy and powerfulness, of which women become direct victim. For example, in *Middlemarch*, Casaubon uses his property to threaten Dorothea and includes an addendum in his will stating that Dorothea would lose his wealth and property if she ever married Will Ladislaw. Also, in some instances of her novels, George Eliot illustrates how the matter of rank and status commit a breach in relationship between man and woman, for which the woman suffers in her life. In *Adam Bede*, Arthur is aware of his supremacy in the society in terms of his status and wealth and he does not hesitate to break his relationship with Hetty Sorrel, who belongs to a lower status. Arthur explains in a letter to her, "...dear Hetty, if I were to do what you one day spoke of, and make you my wife, I should do what you yourself would come to feel was for your misery instead of you welfare. I know you can never be happy except by marrying a man in your own station...". He clarifies what he thinks and writes, "there would be so little in which we should be alike" (376). Thus, Arthur signifies his difference with Hetty in rank and status that becomes the deciding factor in their adjustment rather than mutual feeling of love. Anyway, this event of Hetty's life causes all the later sufferings and the disaster of Hetty's life.

Also, Eliot shows the relation between the prospect of money and women in two ways: firstly, the focus is on those women who believe in the social significance of money and property and secondly, the women who deny the supreme significance of wealth. The women, who have absorbed the social mind-set cannot come out of them, and, in face of advancement, they stick to the

previous personality The narrator in *Middlemarch* narrates a certain time of Lydgate's life when "he had no money or prospects of money; and his practice was not getting more lucrative" (485). This makes Rosamond, Lydgate's wife, upset because she only regards financial gain as the highest achievement that can ensure ability to climb the social ladder; Lydgate's attempts towards advancement of medical treatments bear no worth for her. According to Rosamond, like most others of such society, having wealth and property is the supreme quality or virtue a man can achieve. This difference in ideology creates strife in the relationship of Lydgate and Rosamond.

From the individual point of view, Eliot highlights some characters who are able to surpass the all-embracing influence of money and property. These characters are not obsessed with the dream of attaining wealth and property, but are engrossed in their own passion and so they suffer in certain stages of their lives. The authorial implication here is that the individual, if advances against or beyond social rules and regulations, faces troubles. For example, "Lydgate was ambitious above all to contribute towards enlarging the scientific, rational basis of his profession" (*Middlemarch* 122). However, there comes a time when these people suffer as they do not follow the common way of living a life. The narrator in *Middlemarch* narrates a certain time of Lydgate's life when "he had no money or prospects of money; and his practice was not getting more lucrative" (485).

One other implication in the novels of George Eliot is that the matter of money stands against love – the prospects of love and money stand in a conflicting relationship. When the matter of wealth comes between Arthur and Hetty, the relationship breaks up. Also, Romola leaves Tito Melema when she realizes that Tito has become crazy for materialistic gain, which is against her ideology. The narrator says,



Success had given him [Tito] a growing appetite for all the pleasures that depend on an advantageous social position, and at no moment could it look like a temptation to him, but only like a hideous alternative, to decamp under dishonour, even with a bag of diamonds, and incur the life of an adventurer. (*Romola* 161)

Romola, at a certain time, seems to be bewildered in the thoughts of Tito. She asks Tito, “You talk of substantial good, Tito! Are faithfulness, and love, and sweet grateful memories, no good? Is it no good that we should keep our silent promises on which others build because they believe in our love and truth? Is it no good that a just life should be justly honoured?” (*Romola* 166) In this way, the characters Tito and Romola represent, on the one hand, money and material gain and on the other, love, faith and belief. Also, the choice for Esther Lyon has been between, on the one hand, wealth and supreme comfort and, on the other, love and enlightened spirit. The narrator reflects on Esther’s mind,

Felix had ideas and motives which she did not believe that Harold could understand. ... there were even points in him [Harold] for which she felt a touch, not of angry, but of playful scorn; whereas with Felix she had always a sense of dependence and possible illumination. In those large, grave, candid grey eyes of his, love seemed something that belonged to the high enthusiasm of life, such as might now be for ever shut out from her. (*Felix Holt* 217)

Esther chooses love, and her boldness in choosing her way of life gets support from the author-narrator.

In *Silas Marner*, George Eliot shows the conflicting existence of money and love from the moral level. Silas’s life takes new turns, all of which have a relation with money. First, Silas rejects religion after being wrongly charged of theft he has not committed. Then, he leaves society and grows a passion for gold. In the narrator’s description: it “had been a clinging life; and though the object round which its fibres had clung was a dead disrupted thing, it satisfied the need for clinging” (76). Then again, his love for the girl, Eppie, wipes out his love for gold. Thus, Silas becomes totally well after he gets real love and affection from the



little girl, Eppie. In reality, the love of gold has been unable to mend his sores as the love for his daughter has done. Jeff Nunokawa has described this matter quite perceptively,

The abstractions of sensibility are affianced again to the physical senses when Silas Marner leaves off the love of gold and takes up the love of a girl. While the miser 'feels' the gold in one sense only, the 'senses' that are reawakened under the influences of Eppie are doubled consisting not only of the capacity to apprehend matters of the senses ... but also of the capacity to apprehend things metaphysical." (119)

From one angle, there is a similarity between the change in Silas and the change in Fitzwilliam Darcy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Darcy has been an aristocrat in his behaviour and thoughts; he has been unable to express his feelings. However, Darcy's love for Elizabeth brings about a reawakening in his feeling and thus, his sense of love overshadows his sense of aristocracy – the feelings influenced by wealth. In this way, in both Silas and Darcy, love wins over money. Perhaps, this has been the wish of both Jane Austen and George Eliot to see love win over money in society. Because, the two authors have identified the fact that the matters of money and property leave a negative impact upon the lives of the individual – as a result of which the individual feels constrained.

## **2. Constraint, Lapses and Social Punishment**

The feeling of constraint in the face of social pressure or domination, distracted action which happens as a reaction to such constraint, and the social response to such act – this pattern of action of the individual outlines the parallel structure implicit in the plots of the novels of Austen and Eliot. In a simplified version the thematic structure is something like this: cause of a distracted act – the act – the effect of the act. Represented by men or women, the matter of constraint in social life simply reflects a general truth of reality. However, as in other cases,

there is a special focus on the social restrictions imposed on women. Though a common subject for women novelists, projection of the feeling of being constrained has been unique in Austen and Eliot's novels as the two authors highlight women's awareness of being constrained and their reaction rather than showing them as passive. Even the authors have patterned a cause-and-effect relationship of this matter.

The cause of the distracted action and the distracted action itself are analogous to the relation of constraints and lapses of the novels of Austen and Eliot. From the actions and reactions of the characters narrated in the novels of Austen and Eliot, the readers can sense an inherent feeling of constraint that prevails within the characters. It happens because from the individual point of view, social regulations may not always seem favourable to the individual and may not always cope with the individual's free flowing expressions. In such a situation, social regulations become, in other words, constraints for the individual. The narrative arrangements reflect this parallel theme from both the general and specific point of view in almost all the novels of Austen and Eliot. The matter of social constraint is not so much clearly hinted in the narrative statement. The selection of actions, establishment of cause and effect relationships between the actions of the characters reflect on this inherent feeling of restraint.

From the general perspective, every individual, however, as the scenes of the novels show, is not equally aware of the constraints. The individual who is aware of such constraints and the one who is not aware of them react in different ways. A certain feeling of inability and helplessness works within the person who is not aware of any constraint. The individual may have suppressed his or her inherent desires because of the social barriers, which hammers on the unconscious part of mind. As a result, the individual feels uncertain and frequently slips out-of-

track, although unintentionally. On the other hand, awareness of being constrained naturally creates restlessness, dejection, and disgust in the individual mind and makes the individual sensitive and reactive towards society.

As George Eliot's novels focus on the psychological ups and downs of human beings living in a society, the effect of social restriction upon individual has been for the author, a significant aspect to experiment on. Eliot captures the reactions of the social beings more prominently and intensely than Jane Austen. Through the character Silas of *Silas Marner* George Eliot shows perhaps the most intense reaction of an individual on facing obstacles as a social being. The false charge of theft against Silas makes him so much disappointed that he leaves his own place for the unknown. He finally stops at Raveloe and begins to live alone, aloof and away from the main community as if he rejects the social system. Then again, Tertius Lydgate in *Middlemarch* has been reactive whenever he has felt restriction. Lydgate seems to be aware of the fact that he has chosen a path that is not yet accepted in the society he lives. Yet, he has the courage to continue his task and he knows that he has to face troubles. Still at one stage, Lydgate begins to feel "the hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity" (150). The situation of Lydgate specifically represents the feeling of those individuals who attempt to bring newness or a change in society and face restriction and constraint.

On the other hand, from the female point of view, the scenes of the novels of Austen and Eliot reflect on the fact that society is harsher and stricter towards women than men. Women are constrained within the domestic sphere, are not allowed to enter the outer world, and do not get the opportunity for higher education. As a result, a definite feeling of being constrained works in women which both Austen and Eliot have highlighted in their novels. For example, Mr.



Stelling's remark about women, "They're quick and shallow" (*The Mill* 151) makes Maggie disappointed. The narrator says, "As for Maggie, she had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called 'quick' all her little life, and now it appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority. It would have been better to be slow, like Tom....Maggie was so oppressed by this dreadful destiny that she had no spirit for a retort" (*The Mill* 151). Thus from her very childhood, Maggie can feel that she is under constraints and does not have the freedom to express herself in her own way. Such a feeling of being under constraint drives Dorothea to grasp whatever opportunity she gets to come out of the restriction. In case of Emma, her attempt to control everything surrounding her is a reaction of her inward feeling of being constrained by the rules and regulations of society.

One other unique thing is relating certain incidents that are shown to have cause-and-effect relationship between the feeling of constraint and lapses. An individual under constraint usually reacts in a distracted way and in such a state, the individual naturally make errors – from the lightest to most serious mistakes – some of which may be described as sins. Jane Austen points out minor errors of thought and approach like misconceptions, misjudgements in such characters as Emma, or Elizabeth. Also in Austen's novels, sometimes the focus is on the misdeeds such as Wickham's betrayal, Lydia's elopement and so on. Eliot's novels involve more intense situations like that of Maggie, Hetty, Godfrey etc. However, there is no doubt that the root cause of every situation has been social constraint upon the individual.

Society has its own way of punishing transgressing individuals. This matter of social punishment is generally not a part of Jane Austen novel – the storyline takes a peaceful way through in the closure. However, many of the George Eliot

novels project the very nature of social punishment. The most significant aspect in this case is alienation of the so-called convicted individual. Eliot shows in Chapter Two of Book Seven of *The Mill on the Floss*, how “St.Ogg’s Passes judgement” (502) on Maggie. Two aspects are evident in this situation: firstly, Maggie is strictly punished and her conduct is regarded as “the most aggravated kind” (502) as she is a woman while Stephen is pardoned being a man. The narrator asserts reflecting the social mind, “As for poor Mr. Stephen Guest, he was rather pitiable than otherwise; a young man of five-and-twenty is not to be too severely judged in these cases” (503). Secondly, this incident reflects on the fact that women of the society step ahead to punish a woman. The narrator mockingly describes, “The ladies of St. Ogg’s were not beguiled by any wide speculative conceptions; but they had their favourite abstraction, called society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism: thinking and speaking the worst of Maggie Tulliver, and turning their backs upon her” (518). Such judgements of the society are sometimes wrong from the religious point of view, though religious institutions surprisingly have no function in regulating them.

### **3. Society, Religion and Religious Institutions**

One noticeable aspect of Jane Austen’s novels, which critics have frequently referred to, has been the fact that matters related to religion are almost always absent from the plots. Though persons involved in clerical duties are present in the series of sequences of the novels, there is no scene that shows these clergymen in their working places or performing their clerical duties. However, this is natural regarding the focal point from which the author depicts the whole novel. The setting of Austen’s novels is always within the domestic sphere and so

the church naturally remains out of focus. While the absence of religious feeling within the domestic sphere is indicative of the fact that women perhaps prefer social duties and neglect religious ones, as they remain busy with the social occasions. In Eliot's novels, on the other hand, there is a special focus upon the matters of religion and religious institutions. This is not simply because the author covers the whole community and religion naturally comes into discussion as part of the community, but the main reason is that religion, as a spiritual matter, is related to human psyche and human psychology is the area of Eliot's experimentation. Anyway, religious reality is depicted in the novels mostly from the individual point of view as religion or religious feeling is related to the nourishment of the soul, a realization far deeper than gender-consciousness.

Religion, being an abstract concept, takes a formal shape through religious institutions in a society. Religion has its influence or is expected to have its influence upon human mind. There is no doubt that social mind also influences human mind. In such a reality, social teachings and religious teachings have to co-exist in the human mind. This co-existence may have different results – social teachings can influence religious teachings, both can simply co-exist peacefully, or one can be directly in conflict with the other, which usually creates confusion and a sense of hopelessness among the individuals. In such situations, a number of questions may arise – can the human mind get the true message of religion? Can religious institutions exercise the true thoughts of religion in a dominating social system? What is the result of the inward tension of human mind regarding the choice between the social teachings and religious teachings? The narrative arrangement, the characters and their actions of Eliot's novels reflect such queries throughout.



The matter of religion, in George Eliot's novels, is present on two levels: on the surface level where the religious atmosphere of the society is factually represented, reflects the thematic and fundamental implications of the author. Again on the narrative level, the direct authorial elucidation in separate paragraphs about the matter of religion directs the readers to observe the situations depicted in the novels from this light. In both ways, the plots of Eliot's novels bring out the effects of religion and religious institutions upon individuals living in society.

Firstly, the scenes of George Eliot's novels highlight the divided but co-existing religious methodologies and belief-systems of a community and the hint is upon the silent conflict and confusion these divided beliefs create in the society. Among her novels, *Adam Bede* explores the religious atmosphere most vividly, though *Romola*, *Felix Holt* and *Daniel Deronda* too explore various issues related to religion. In *Adam Bede* for example, various sequence of actions and narrative references illustrate how the traditional and orthodox Christianity and its dissected sub-divisions – Evangelicalism or Methodism and so on – create silent conflicts and confusion among the inhabitants of the society. In the first few chapters of *Adam Bede*, the narrator portrays the religious atmosphere of the village of Hayslope. Some of the villagers have welcomed Methodism and Dinah Morris is the preacher there. The focus is on the reactions of the simple villagers and the clergymen in this situation. The Methodists on the one hand and their preacher, Dinah on the other, who is surprisingly a woman, have become subject of discussion among the villagers. The narrative of this novel stresses on the fact that the sense of division between the Methodists and the Orthodox effects the simplest interactions between the villagers. This comes out in simple conversations too. For example, in the very first chapter of *Adam Bede*, the narrative focuses on five working men, who have been making doors and window frames. One of them

named Wiry Ben laughingly teases the other working man Seth Bede who is a Methodist and says, “We’ll hang up th’ door at fur end o’ th’ shop an’ write on’t ‘Seth Bede, the Methody, his work’” (3). Also, the narrative includes sequences that show how the people of the community are curious about the activities of the Methodists. For example, there has been “...an unusual appearance of excitement in the village of Hayslope...” (11), and “The stronger curiosity of the women had drawn them quite to the edge of the Green, where they could examine more closely the Quaker-like costume and odd deportment of the female Methodists” (18). Not only that, in *Adam Bede*, Dinah’s evangelical Methodist preaching is set against Reverend Irwine’s traditional church leadership. A conversation between Mr. Irwine and Joshua Rann about the Methodist preaching significantly points out the conflict. Mr. Irwine says to Joshua, “We must ‘live and let live’, Joshua, in religion as well as other things. ... things won’t go very far wrong in Hayslope, depend upon it” (63). In the same way, in the novel *Felix Holt*, there are hints of such divisions between religious sub-sectors.

Secondly, the novels of Eliot highlight the relation of inhabitants with the church and the impression of the clergymen among the common people. The narrator of *Middlemarch* says about Farebrother,

...his preaching was ingenious and pithy, like the preaching of the English Church in its robust age, and his sermons were delivered without book. People outside his parish went to hear him; and, since to fill the church was always the most difficult part of a clergyman’s function, here was another ground for a careless sense of superiority (147).

The narrator of *Felix Holt* comments about “The rector of Little Treby,” popularly known as Parson Jack, who is a “...clergyman thoroughly unclerical in his habits had a piquancy about him which made him a sort of practical joke” (106). In a somewhat mocking tone, the narrator states:



When his red eagle face and white hair were seen the platform, the Dissenters hardly cheered this questionable Radical; but to make amends, all the Tory farmers gave him a friendly ‘hurray’. ‘Let’s hear what old Jack will say for himself,’ was the predominant feeling among them; ‘he’ll have something funny to say, I’ll bet a penny’. (106)

The implication is that the clergymen fail to maintain their grave impression and rather become funny to the villagers. Such unexpected impression of the clergymen among general community people is often criticized through the narrative. In Chapter Seventeen of *Adam Bede*, the authorial voice intervenes receding the story for a while to convey her analytical explanation about the characteristics of the clergymen. A comparative analysis is included about Mr. Irwin and Mr. Ryde. This chapter reflects the doubt of the author that the true message of religion is not transported to the villagers. Also, the author seems to be critical about the clergy who can preach a great deal but cannot apply them in their own lives.

Thus, the religious atmosphere of the community, as portrayed in Eliot’s novels, reflects on the inactivity and ineffectiveness of religious institutions and religious teachings in the society. Jane Austen, in the same way, shows the absence of religious fervor in the domestic sphere. There are references to Christmas Eve, for example, in *Emma*. Other than that, there is no trace of religious feelings in the minds of the characters of Austen’s novels. In Eliot’s novels, there is a clear picture of how the religious institutions have remained simply as institutions, maintaining the tradition and nothing else. The churches have failed to preach morality, regulating people’s lives and establishing justice in the true sense. Such an authorial observation is revealed through the character Dr. Kenn, “... the Church ought to represent the feeling of the community so that every parish should be a family knit together by Christian brotherhood under a spiritual father. But



ideas of discipline and Christian fraternity are entirely relaxed; they can hardly be said to exist in the public mind;" (*The Mill* 507).

In *Romola*, the insistence has been on the fact that religion must be about solving the problems of human mind and the soul too, and should not only remain as an abstraction to the human mind. Bardo de Bardi and his son Dino represent the two forms of religion. When Romola asks his brother: "What is this religion of yours, that places visions before natural duties?" (90) Dino answers: "My father has lived amidst human sin and misery without believing in them: he has been one busy picking shining stones in a mine, while there was a world dying of plague above him." (90) These have been the teachings of Savonarola – it seems in the earlier part that the authorial voice supports this historical figure. Savonarola believed that "God had committed to the Church that sacred lamp of truth for the guidance and salvation of men, and he saw that the Church, in its corruption had become a sepulcher to hide the lamp"(121). However, the sequences of actions and narrative report show that Savonarola himself has failed to learn and exercise what he has taught others. The reason the authorial voice identifies is that the spiritual leader himself is motivated by political incentives.

George Eliot's novels clarify that social teachings overshadow religious teachings and ordains. In Maggie's case, for example, as Dr. Kenn asserts, "...the Church in its original constitution and discipline responds opening its arms to the penitent, watching over its children to the last, never abandoning them until they are hopelessly reprobate" (*The Mill* 504). However, Dr. Kenn can sense that social punishment is going to be harsh towards Maggie and for her, "... life here will be attended not only with much pain, but with many obstructions" (*The Mill* 508). Thus, the hint is that there is no function of religious institutions in the society in the true sense. Moreover, the focus is on the corruption in the religious institutions

and the clergymen in the novels of Eliot. To use the words of Tim Dolin, George Eliot “was highly critical of the many ways that worship – the affirmation of sacredness in daily observances – had become corrupted by zealotry, chicanery, and arid institutional habits and formulas” (166).

On the whole, the scenes of Eliot’s novels establish the authorial proposition that religious teachings are not prominent in the lives of the individuals as the social norms and guidelines are; this is one of the main causes of internal conflicts and turmoil in the individual. Side by side, the sequences of her novels along with the narrative guideline suggest what true religious faith means. As David Carroll says, “... at the end of the novel we see George Eliot re-establishing the value of religion, but it is a religion which has been carefully revalued and established as ‘an exaltation of the human’”( 201). In *Silas Marner*, Eliot seems to imply the presence of a Ruler under whose will is the ordered cosmos. Carroll points out that Eliot reflects her opinion through the character Dolly Winthrop. He summarizes Eliot’s thought thus: “Where knowledge fails, the gap between the individual and the controlling universe must be bridged by trust which is fostered by human love (201).” Carroll also comments, “This is George Eliot’s final position: trust in an ordered universe is not the result of an intellectual verification of cause and effect. It is the product of love’s mediation (204)”. The endings of George Eliot’s novels bear authorial implication even in the characters’ receiving moral and psychological happiness among a feeling of love and affection. Perhaps the author wants to indicate that this is the true matter of religion. At least in this respect, Austen resembles her because Austen herself believes basically in the religion of love and affection.

Finally, to describe in one sentence, George Eliot’s novels illuminate the religion of humanity, which is the core of her philosophy. Immediately after the



publication of *Romola*, *The Westminster Review* highlighted this fact of Eliot's novels: "Her imagination has a strong bias towards moral conceptions rather than towards sensuous, much less passionate ones; ... The moral progress of mankind is a far higher thing to her than the finest poetry..." (26-27). Christianity and its various sects have never been the main subject of Eliot's novels, they are only used as symbols to portray the religious structure of a society and references to Judaism in *Daniel Deronda* are a proof of this. The authorial hint is on the absence of the religion of humanity, which, according to her, is the only way to salvation. Edward Dowden in his essay, "*Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*" says,

...the central conception of *Daniel Deronda* is religious, ... not in the sense which implies faith in a personal providence superintending the lives of men, or faith in the intervention of the miraculous and the supernatural,... The religious conception of *Daniel Deronda*, as of the other writings of George Eliot, is that of a life of mankind over, above, and around the life of the individual man or woman, and to which the individual owes his loyalty and devotion, the passion of his heart, and the utmost labour of his hand... The Judaic element comes second in the book – the human element first. (120)

There has been a tendency among the critics to relate the personal religious beliefs of Jane Austen and George Eliot with their novels. As Kelly suggests: "Twentieth-century academic and professional critics, predominantly secular in outlook, have questioned the relevance of Austen's religion to her fictional art" (154). Some critics like Martin J. Svaglic have also questioned George Eliot's personal belief:

She [George Eliot] appreciates the importance of religion in human life and writes novels to enforce it; but she does not believe in God. She espouses the determinism of Bray and Mackay; yet she makes duty, with its implication of free will, the chief word of her creed. She does not consider herself bound in her private life by the traditional laws of marriage; yet her journals and her novels maintain the sanctity of the marital union and the importance of the family bond (285-86).

However, such a comparison between the writer's own belief-system in life and the thoughts reflected in her novels, often falls off the mark. A novel in general



reflects the expression of the authorial mind and may identify the implication of the authorial voice, which may or may not be similar with the personal self of the author. In case of Jane Austen and George Eliot, the implication is that true religion supports the feelings of faith, love and harmony and never grants any division and discrimination in society. This has been the authors' message to the readers throughout their novels.

## CHAPTER TWO FEMALE CHARACTERS

Female characterization has been a special feature of the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot. The issues related to female characters are at the centre of the novels and are presented from the female point of view. Thus the two authors have been able to overcome the "...struggle paradigmatic of the conflict between conventional gender roles and of the resistance to traditional narrative authority in which a masterly male subject speaks for and over the female object of his gaze" (Mezei 66). The matter of authorial involvement in the novels of Austen and Eliot is frequent through narrative comments and direct interventions in matters related to the delineation of the female characters. Moreover, different authorial strategies are used in the formation of these female characters: the authorial knowledge and experience of general characteristics and attitudes of women has been the main stimulus in creating the secondary female characters, while the female protagonists are rendered from the authorial consciousness – that is female. This setting up of the strong gendered authoriality in female characterization makes Austen and Eliot different from other female writers from Behn to Fanny Burney, who have contributed to the advancements of the techniques of delineating characters from the female point of view but never reached its perfection.

Commonly, all the female characters are delineated from the female point of view but this is done in two different processes. Firstly, in case of the secondary female characters, the narrator is an observer, who narrates from the zero focalization. The narrated sequences project no fantasy but the most realistic actions and approaches of women in general, that partly and collectively render realistic situations and create the background of the novel. Secondly, the female

protagonists are introduced with uncommonness in approach in the realistic setting of the novels. These characters get the narrator's sympathy, support and importance. Sometimes these characters function as focalizers in the novels and thus the narrator's and the character's consciousness is mingled in the narrative. The authorial voice, on such sequences generally asserts in support of the female protagonists, which eventually proves the relation between authorial consciousness and character's consciousness. In other words, the authors have created these female protagonists with their own passions, with some realistic features and from introspection. These characters are products of the authors' experimentation – the authors have projected the female characters from the inside and out, which shows the balance or imbalance between the characters' internal thoughts and external actions. Technically, all of these have been possible because every part of the narrative voice: the storyteller, focalizer and the authorial voice is female. This has naturally created a different effect in female characterization or representation of female characters in the novels. And interestingly, female voices that present the female characters from the perspective of a woman, differentiates the presentation from that of the male voice.

Therefore, female characterization in the novels of Austen and Eliot are of two categories: one, the female characters that are the direct product of the authors' observation and two, the female characters that are created from the authors' introspection. However, in case of both Austen and Eliot's novels, a balance is skillfully maintained between representation of the fact and rendition of a personal philosophy. This balance between imagination and reality in patterning the characters' acts, especially maintaining the balance in a way that the actions of the characters eventually seem to be realistic, is something rare among the novelists. Also, the narrative arrangements of the novels of Austen and Eliot are formatted in



a way that reflects the action-reaction relation of situations. Specifically, the acts of the female protagonists that are unusual in the eyes of society are placed side by side with the reactive statements of other characters, who represent social opinion – sometimes by directly including their dialogues and sometimes through reference to such comments in the narrative.

### **(A) Creation of Female Characters from Observation**

The minor or secondary female characters of the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot represent the common features of women of a society. From the narrator's perspective, these secondary female characters are narrated with zero focalization and are projections of the narrator's observation of them from outside.

From the authors' perspective, to typify these characters as creations from observation indicates that Austen and Eliot have been able to overcome the ambiguous authorial status that can occur as a result of the struggle between following experience and tradition in the matter of characterization. It is because, these female characters are clear reflections of the authors' subjective experience, where there is no strong influence of traditional rules of characterization. The authors have not drawn these characters from the conventional stock characters and there are no depictions of angels or monsters as the male-dominated conventions have created and influenced to exercise. Rather, these two authors have treated these female characters from a neutral but critical standpoint to highlight their basic tendencies and attitudes. These characters are not totally good or evil in nature, but project various combinations of both good and evil qualities as naturally happens to be in reality.

The minor or secondary female characters of the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot represent the common features of women of a society. These

characters remain the same throughout the novels. They are not presented in detail but the most noticeable traits of their characteristics have got special focus in the novels. Through the short appearances in the plots, these female characters are recognized as realistic and universal. They are realistic because these characters highlight the common attitudes of average women living in the society. They are universal because through them, Austen and Eliot portray those fundamental traits of women that are common in women of any place of the world. Also, the narrative structures invite the readers to regard them as an expression of a woman's psychological concerns.

The description of these minor female characters is authoritative, controlled and witty and at the same time independent of the author – they are simply characters with short appearances and not merely puppets in the exteriorization of some authorial conceptions. This has been possible because of the authors' skilful use of narrative strategy. In presenting realistic actions of these female characters, the authorial judgement is not hidden or disguised within the storyline or characters – as it happened in case of their contemporary female novelists – but is prominently established separately and independently. However, particularly commenting on the attitudes of these secondary female characters, the authors have always maintained an acceptable way of making judgements. One of the strengths in delineating these minor female characters is a strong authorial persona, who does not only remain temporarily for a moment like Sara Scott's or Charlotte Lennox's narrators to point out subtle defects of characteristic traits of minor characters, but sustain throughout the novel.

Each of these female characters has very short spaces in the whole narrative structure, though has an enduring effect in the progression of events. The characteristic trait of such a female character is well established in one or two

sequences. Mostly represented in the mimetic mode, the combination of the mimetic and diegetic mode is also used in some cases. The mimetic mode enables the reader to have a direct confrontation with the nature of the specific character and judge the character or the characteristics in the reader's own way freely. However, the narrative statements in between the mimetic representations surely motivate the reader's judgements a little (if not fully) about the character. Also on the narrator's part, a short introduction signifies the trait the sequence of actions of the character notifies. Again, while narrating these female characters, the tone of the narrative description is satirical or critical. The satirical tone signifies the authors' dislike and the critical tone signifies the aspects the authors are concerned about. Thus, the significance of the characterization remains in the authorial implications and in the illumination of the common but specific approaches of women.

Thus, on a larger meaning, the actions of these minor female characters establish the authorial claims about women's general tendencies in society. The authorial control is maintained on selecting the specific actions that reflect the specific attitudes of the female characters the authors have intended to highlight and typify. In every case, the stress is on the different shades of women's passivity – enthusiastic acceptance, indifference and eccentricity. Though female passivity is generally produced with importance in many novels of other writers, Jane Austen and George Eliot establishes this in the background and female responsiveness is put at the centre. Nancy's story may have come at the forefront in other's novels, but in Eliot's case, it is secondary to Eppie's expressiveness and recognition of spiritual love. On the other hand, Jane's passivity and most appraised marriage with Bingley is on the background and Elizabeth's love story is prominently drawn in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Or in *The Mill on the Floss*, the character of Lucy



is a repository of traditional feminine virtues of submissiveness, lovingness and patience, who, is marginalized as a secondary character, but in a novel of any other novelists, would have been at the centre. While Thomas Hardy gives the central focus in the passiveness and victimization of Tess in *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, George Eliot puts a similar character and a similar situation through Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede* in the secondary level, and prominently placing Dinah with more importance and significance.

Austen and Eliot have presented the attitudes of the minor female characters specifically in terms of the workings of society at large. These characters separately represent the common activities of women and thus illuminate the objective truth of society. The reliability of the narrative presentation is established through a distanced observer, who is at the same time one of those people depicted, but in this case, what is seen as reality does not totally depend on the social position of the perceiver. The short mimetic representations of realistic sequences produce these female characters, with special focuses on the specific character traits of these characters.

The actions of these secondary female characters are portrayed satirically to highlight them as negative aspects of women's characteristics and this is done from the female point of view. The narrative stance of Austen's novels itself works in support of the female perspective as narrator-observer seems to be closely monitoring the attitudes of the minor female characters from the least distance. On the other hand, Eliot's narrator seems to maintain more distance from her female characters than Austen's. Representation of realistic female characters from such distance has been criticized as Eliot's intention to work on the male tradition. However, she has not worked in the male tradition and she has not worked in a feminine tradition either – by only depicting female characters actions and

romantically female-oriented situations. Eliot has worked from the female consciousness and has created the realistic background with attitudes of women in society to make these delineations and authorial messages related to it credible irrespective of gender and thus separating her novels from the marked feminine writing.

Eliot's characterization of secondary female characters happens to be different from both male and so-called feminist authors for several reasons: first of all and most importantly, because these characters depict the psychological realism of women's existence in a social structure. Dickens' characterization has been criticized as failing to match the psychological realism achieved by George Eliot in her representation of a complex inner life. Secondly, the narrative structures invite the reader to regard this realism as an expression of a woman's concerns related to women's situation. Thirdly, as many other novelists render minor female characters with specific characteristic problems for which they themselves are suggested as responsible, Eliot shows the cause and effect relation of these characters' attitudes and thus establish the fact that they are not to be blamed for their problems eventually.

Again, the selected actions of these female characters depicted in Eliot's novels do not simply represent the common traits of women; they also signify the effect – less positive and more negative – of such passivity evident in their attitudes. The narrative situations are arranged in the novels of Eliot in such a way that show how actions and events gradually lead to complexity because of such conducts of women. The sequence of events presented in Eliot's novels thus mirror only reality and complexities of real situations – both in the regional and universal sense. R. T. Jones reflects on this aspect when he says, “The ways in which George



Eliot writes about the people she creates in the novel suggest something of the complexity that is required in thinking about real people" (63).

One of the instances is the character of Nancy Lammeter in *Silas Marner*, through whom Eliot draws a picture of a devoted wife. Simple and beautiful, Nancy has always maintained the so-called good manners and discipline in her attitudes. The narrator's description of this character hints at this:

On all the duties and proprieties of life, from filial behaviour to the arrangements of the evening toilet, pretty Nancy Lammeter, by the time she was three and twenty, had her unalterable little code, and had formed every one of her habits in strict accordance with that code. She carried those decided judgements within her in the most unobtrusive way: they rooted themselves in her mind, and grew there as quietly as grass. Years ago, we know, she insisted on dressing like Priscilla, because 'it was right for sisters to dress alike', and because 'she would do what was right if she wore a gown dyed with cheese-colouring'. That was a trivial but typical instance of the mode in which Nancy's life was regulated. (*Silas* 156)

This has made Nancy somewhat blind to the negative sides of life, and in a moment of crisis, Nancy struggles from within though she does not react outwardly. However, the authorial voice is aware that the "shock to Nancy's mingled pride and ignorance of the world's evil might even be too much for her delicate frame" (*Silas* 158). Nancy has been trained to be a devoted wife and a good mother but there seems to be a great distance in her relationship with Godfrey. Nancy defines the problem in her own way, the narrator reflects on Nancy's thoughts, "... a woman can always be satisfied with devoting herself to her husband, but a man wants something that will make him look forward more – and sitting by the fire is so much duller to him than to a woman" (*Silas* 155). Thus, Eliot points out the fact that Nancy cannot realize her inability to come out of her coded life to communicate with her husband's thoughts.



In *Middlemarch*, the character of Rosamond is experimentally plotted as the wife of Lydgate, an advanced and uncommon man compared to the common men of the society. Rosamond has all the aspirations, abilities, and attitudes that the provincial society recommended in a young woman. Rosamond's dream has been to climb the social ladder through her husband's success in financial gain and also through maintaining relations with the aristocrats. The narrative adds to highlight this typicality of this character by saying that she "was so intensely conscious of having a cousin who was a baronet's son staying in the house, that she imagined the knowledge of what was implied by his presence to be diffused through all other minds; and when she introduced Captain Lydgate to her guests, she had a placid sense that his rank penetrated them as if it had been an odour" (477). Rosamond's dream has always to be "visibly as well as ideally floating" "above the Middlemarch level" (478). Therefore, she misunderstands or cannot understand Lydgate's dreams. The misunderstanding reflects on the fact that the products of Mrs. Lemon's school are locked in a so-called systematic world they have known to be true, where material gain and social mobility are the most important things. In this case, the authorial hint is on women's inability to come out of traditional and conventional thoughts to welcome novelty and absorb an enlightened concept. Also, the authorial stress is on the fact that though women are restricted within the web of social codes and are prohibited from advancement, they have no dissatisfaction for this. Rather, they follow the customs with utmost sincerity and happiness. For example, Celia is satisfied in her conjugal life because she can perform as a wife as she has been trained to.

Moreover, Eliot has highlighted some of the negative aspects of female characters in general. In such cases, the authorial comments do not leave any scope for the readers' rebuke upon the negative attitudes and actions of the characters,

rather direct the readers towards sympathy and compassion. This is because, questionable actions of some of these secondary female characters are shown to be the results of some social obligations. For example, in Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the predilection for the beautiful and the amiable in the society makes Mary Garth react harshly and "her shrewdness had a streak of satiric bitterness continually renewed and never carried utterly out of sight" (93). The inherent fear of not getting social adoration makes her approach violent and stingy. All the repulsiveness she shows is not so unlikely, because, as the narrator philosopher analyses, "... to be called an ugly thing in contrast with that lovely creature your companion, is apt to produce some effect beyond a sense of fine veracity and fitness in the phrase" (93). In this way, the readers are driven to reconsider Mary's attitudes from this light through the authorial interpretation of the situation. Even this aspect of Mary's character is presented more analytically by the narrator: "At the age of two-and-twenty Mary had certainly not attained that perfect good sense and good principle which are usually recommended to the less fortunate girl, as if they were to be obtained in quantities ready mixed, with a flavour of resignation as required" (93).

Similarly in the novels of Jane Austen, the sequential series of actions with the mimetic representations together insist on the relation between the social conceptions and the minor characters' wrong actions. Some instances that reflect women's negative reactions are the results of believing too strictly in the social customs and codes. Lydia's elopement has been such a consequence which happens because of her fanciful thoughts about the supreme achievement called marriage. Lydia has only wanted to be married and when it happens, she only rejoices, remaining indifferent to all that happens around her. Austen records Lydia's exultation after she meets her sisters, when she says to Jane, "Ah! Jane, I



take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman" (*PP* 329). For Lydia, being a married woman raises her in status in society. Later, the narrator says, "Her ease and good spirits increased. She longed to see Mrs. Philips, the Lucases, and all their other neighbours, and to hear herself called 'Mrs. Wickham', by each of them, and in the mean time, she went after dinner to shew her ring and boast of being married, to Mrs. Hill and the two housemaids" (*PP* 329-330).

Lydia's mother, Mrs. Bennet also takes successful marriage as supreme achievement for women. It may seem that the characterization of Mrs. Bennet is a caricature of those elderly women who act almost to the extent of being ridiculous only to follow the social trends. However, there is no exaggeration in this particular characterization; the character of Mrs. Bennet is the most realistic in representing those motherly figures who almost lose the capacity to think wisely. Mrs. Bennet reacts more, and thinks less. She laments at the news of Lydia's elopement. But surprisingly, as soon as she hears the news of her daughter's marriage, her mood changes noticeably. The authorial voice describes this in a mocking tone:

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It was a fortnight since Mrs. Bennet had been down stairs, but on this happy day, she again took her seat at the head of her table, and in spirits oppressively high. No sentiment of shame gave a damp to her triumph. The marriage of a daughter, which had been the first object of her wishes, since Jane was sixteen, was now on the point of accomplishment, and her thoughts and her words ran wholly on those attendants of elegant nuptials, fine muslins, new carriages, and servants. She was busily searching through the neighbourhood for a proper situation for her daughter, and, without knowing or considering what their income might be, rejected many as deficient in size and importance. (*PP* 323-324)

Perhaps, Mrs. Bennet has no moral in the true sense of the word but she believes in the moral of getting married and having financial security and climbing the social ladder. This is why she swiftly changes her conceptions about Darcy, who is going



to be her future son-in-law, when she finds him to be the richest among the bachelors. She exclaims, "Good gracious! Lord bless me! Only think! ... Oh! My sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it – nothing at all." (PP 386)

In contrast to Mrs. Bennet, there is Mrs. Dashwood who is an enduring and stable type of woman. After leaving her own home and coming to a new place, she remains tolerant and calm, which is echoed in her tone. She says, "As for the house itself, to be sure ... it is too small for our family: but we will make ourselves tolerably comfortable for the present, as it is too late in the year for improvements" (SS 40). Thus the narrative reports of her actions and her own conversations recorded in the novel present her as a calm and peace-loving woman. She follows the existing customs in her life but not with exaggeration like Mrs. Bennet.

Interestingly, the extremity and eccentricity of Mrs. Bennet are observed in the character of Mrs. Tulliver of Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. George Eliot portrays the character of Mrs. Tulliver as a symbol of material yearnings and passions. The most important thing for Mrs. Tulliver is "all her laid-up treasures" that include linen-chests, silver tea-pots, best china, spoons and skewers, ladles and so on. When Mr. Tulliver faces the most tragic misfortune, Mrs. Tulliver is shocked more because her treasures will be sold and less for the actual disaster. Chapter Two of Book Three highlights the typicality of Mrs. Tulliver's lamentation through the combination of mimetic and diegetic representation. However, she grieves for her favourite treasures; this is reflected in her own words recorded in the novel: "To think o' these clothes as I spun Myself, ... And the pattern I chose myself – and bleached so beautiful ... And they're all to be sold, and go into strange people's houses, and perhaps be cut with the knives, and wore out before I'm dead. You'll never have one of 'em, my boy..." (The Mill 205). The

narrator, as her tone signifies, is critical about the approach of these female characters. The short comments in between the mimetic presentations stress on the exaggerated behaviour of Mrs. Tulliver, for example, on one occasion, the narrator states, "... she went on, lifting things out and turning them over with an excitement all the more strange and piteous because the stout blonde woman was usually so passive" (*The Mill* 205).

On the whole, the authorial implication behind the focusing on the abnormalities of women's attitudes is that the framework of the social conceptions under which women generally is imprisoned diminish the ability to retain women's individuality, make the life monotonous, aimless, devoid of enlightenment and advancement. The narrative structure of the novels of Austen and Eliot is thus arranged that the stress is on two opponents side by side: the influential social structure and the strength of it on the one side, the subservience of women or inability to come out of the codes of conduct on the other. Though these society women are mockingly and satirically portrayed in the novels, the sequential series of events and the narrative of the novels of Austen and Eliot present the social situations in a way that the readers figure out these characters as victims of the social oppression rather than blaming them for their characteristic attitudes.

Coming back to Austen, the secondary female characters in her novels project women's general tendency of being extremely social. Women in society, women's posture in relation to society, or the influence of social customs in women's lives – whatever be the frame, the secondary female characters of the novels of Austen project these matters concretely. The sequences of actions in which these characters appear project the general tendency of them of being extremely social – social duties are obligatory to them. Moreover, these women have rarely any personal character-traits that are free from their obsession with



social ordinance. Representing various age groups, the actions of these female characters reflect the fact that if women in general have any wish of their own, it is to be socially acceptable. On the whole, these secondary female characters are developed on two basic thematic structures: one, these characters think and perform only and mainly in the socially accepted way –whatever they think is manipulated by the indiscernible social psychosis; two, these characters do not have the ability to think from a personal point of view. They have failed to retain their individuality. Based on these two fundamental tendencies, these female characters have developed various attitudes.

Jane Austen has portrayed secondary female characters of different age groups to highlight those actions that reflect on women's attachment to social customs. In terms of their performing the social duties, the narrative actions of these female characters can be divided in three stages: one, the stage of learning, when young girls are guided by the elders to be socially so-called accomplished and amiable; two, the stage of performing, specifically in the pre-marital and post-marital condition when women fully concentrate on social duties, which become priority to them; three, the state of guiding and motivating others to perform the social duties appropriately and attentively – the elder ladies or the motherly figures do this.

Most of the time, the focus is upon women's training period to be socially accomplished, on women's interactions with their friends and neighbours before and after marriage, on the monotonous lifestyle without parties and balls. The novels show how the process of women's absorbing social concepts and customs starts from the very early age. Some have knowledge to read and write, especially to write letters, a little training to play sweet melodies in the piano, a bit of training in knitting and sewing and some knowledge of attending balls and parties in due



manners. Young girls learn these things in the name of education. The authorial stress is on girls' receiving social guidance with attention and enthusiasm. Some of these girls remain confused about what these social codes of life really signify but still follow them without any hesitation. Maria Bertram of *Mansfield Park*, for example, follows everything she is advised to do but she does not know the connotations of the social performances. As Marilyn Butler says, Maria is "barely half aware of the moral implications of what she is doing" (222). The character of Mary Crawford is placed in comparison with Maria in the novel. Mary is a lady of the social kind, not only trained to social ways of living but also aware of the implications of such acts. As a result, she can adjust quite comfortably to any social gatherings. Thus, the two contrasting characters, involved in the same field of actions i.e. performing according to the social customs, reflect on the difference in reception ability from the psychological angle.

Most of the actions of these female characters included in these novels show their habit of interacting with neighbours. The focus is on the private visits, parties, and balls – a number of scenes of these novels focus only on such private visits, parties and balls in details. The young female characters like the Bertram sisters, the Miss Lucases, the Bennet sisters, the Dashwood sisters and so on remain busy visiting and interacting with neighbours and attending parties because these have always been the priority for the young women without which life is of no worth to them. The narrator in *Pride and Prejudice* highlights women's eagerness to remain busy with social programmes:

If there had not been a Netherfield ball to prepare for and talk of, the younger Miss Bennets would have been in a pitiable state, at this time, for from the day of the invitation, to the day of the ball, there was such a succession of rain as prevented their walking to Meryton once. No aunt, no officers, no news could be sought after (131).

Enthusiasm is also within the elderly women of the society. These women who have absorbed the social customs and rules and internalized the existing social conceptions and have practiced them for years act more like a representative of social authority and speak more as a mouthpiece of social customs and rules of conduct. At least one such character is inluded in almost every novel of Jane Austen.

As part of the social custom, the elderly ladies of the society take the task of arranging good marriages for the young women as a duty. The mothers who have unmarried daughters, are always anxious about this. Yet, there are those mothers too, who have finished the duty of arranging marriage for their daughters, and are now concerned about other unmarried girls. Mrs. Allen in *Northanger Abbey* is such a woman, who is “probably aware that if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad” (6) and so she invites Catherine Morland to go to Bath with her. Mrs. Jennings in *Sense and Sensibility*, on the other hand, whose daughters are married and settled, has “... now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world” (46). Also Mrs. Jennings is always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl” (47).

Moreover, Austen’s novels show that there are some women in society who are indifferent and reluctant to the social rules and customs and who only remain part of the society. Lady Bertram of *Mansfield Park* is such an instance, who has no charm left in life. She has married a wealthy man to secure her fortune as the society advises, and her behaviour seems to be cold towards her husband. The authorial voice points out this aspect of her character: “Lady Bertram did not at all like to have her husband leave her; but she was not disturbed by any alarm for his safety, or solicitude for his comfort, being one of those persons who think nothing can be dangerous or difficult, or fatiguing to anybody but themselves”(26). So is



Lady Middleton of *Sense and Sensibility*, who is never enthusiastic about anything although she is never absent from any party or social gathering. In some of the scenes of the novel, the focus is on her “calmness of manner” (52). The narrator says, “Her insipidity was invariable, for even her spirits were all the same; and though she did not oppose the parties arranged by her husband ... she never appeared to receive more enjoyment from them, than she might have experienced in sitting at home” (52-53).

This characteristic indifference of Lady Bertram and Lady Middleton’s attitudes may be interpreted as complacency. Such attitude may result from a feeling of self-satisfaction which is in contrast to Mrs. Norris’ officiousness. The character of Mrs. Norris represents the exaggerated behaviour of some of the women in society. Not needed or requested, Mrs. Norris by herself and by her own enthusiasm does many things for the Bertram family. She attends her nieces and guides them, she remains “too busy in contriving and directing the general little matter ... superintending their various dresses with economical expedient, for which nobody thanked her,” (MP 143). However, Mrs. Norris always hates Fanny and even refuses to adopt her as there is no material gain in this task. Such women do not have the ability to help anyone in the true sense but they are always present to comment, guide, and influence others.

Again, two contrasting tendencies are prominent in the actions of these minor female characters while interacting with others: inherent competitiveness among the ladies and outward tendency of pretentious admirations. There is a competition between young ladies to be adored and prove to be more attractive, more accomplished and well-mannered than others in the neighbourhood. Between married women, the competition is in showing themselves more financially stable than each other. The elderly two women compete in presenting their daughters as



the best in the neighbourhood. The narratives of the novels of Austen simultaneously points out the inward competitive attitude and outward politeness. For this reason, From an inherent earnestness to have more importance than any other, the Miss Steeles watch the Miss Dashwoods "...with a jealous eye, as intruding on their ground, and sharing the kindness which they wanted to monopolize" (SS 239). The outward behaviour of these ladies is too much polite and well-mannered for the inherent dislike or jealousy to ever appear to reflect their attitude and expression. The authorial voice frequently points out the pretentious and artificial deportments of these ladies in contrast to their inherent thoughts. For example, the narrator comments in *Sense and Sensibility* about Lady Middleton, "Though nothing could be more polite than Lady Middleton's behavior to Elinor and Marianne, she did not like them at all. Because they neither flattered herself nor her children..." (239-240). Austen satirizes the competitiveness that interferes with female harmony. In *Sense and Sensibility*, she foregrounds woman's inhumanity to woman in the early part of the book in the infamous negotiation scene that takes place between John and Fanny Dashwood about how much money to give Mrs. Dashwood and the Dashwood sisters.

Functionally, the secondary female characters of the novels of Austen and Eliot appear in contrast to the protagonists – as foils or as opposing force. These characters are not superficial like the minor characters of Fanny Burney's novels, rather they create the realistic atmosphere that gives credibility to the characterization of female protagonists. These secondary female characters, who are obedient to social rules and customs, are placed in contrast to the rebellious female protagonists of Austen and Eliot's novels. In *Middlemarch*, Celia, who "had those light young feminine tastes which grave and weather-worn gentlemen sometimes prefer in a wife;" (60) and Rosamond who has been one of the best and

accomplished students of Mrs. Lemon's school, together stand parallel to Dorothea. Jane Austen similarly places Jane Bennet as the sister of Elizabeth and Miss Bertrams and Mary Crawford in parallel to Fanny. The implication lies in the contrast between these female protagonists and these secondary female characters; the latter establishing the normal trend of life and thus reflecting how rebellious and different are the characters created from the authorial introspection.

### **(B) Creation of Female Characters from Introspection**

The female protagonists have produced the best opportunity for Jane Austen and George Eliot to establish the authorial points of view in their novels. The two authors have gone on a long journey to the core of their minds to profoundly re-judge the events of their own lives. From that experience, they have developed a consciousness – a female consciousness – that can explore the reasons and the truth behind women's attitudes. Austen and Eliot have narrated the female protagonists of their novels from such consciousness.

The actions in the novels of these two authors are centred round the female protagonists and the authorial concentration is upon the various movements of the mind and attitude of them. As from the male point of view, the sequences of Dickens's novels like *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield* concentrate on the male protagonist's passions and emotions and the major female character is projected in relation to the male protagonist, Austen and Eliot, from the female point of view, shows the situations from the perspective of the major female characters of the novels. This has given them the opportunity to portray the female characters from three different angles: first, the outward actions and reactions, second, the thought process of the characters and third, a sensitive exploration of the characters' subconscious mind from the perspective of the authorial



consciousness. The last two stages represent the two layers of the character's mind: the outer layer and the inner layer or subconscious part. The outer layer of thought-process is presented through internal focalization while the other part, which is the subconscious part and of which the character herself is not aware of, is presented through the authorial voice. "This is the special value of the novelist's imagination," to use the words of R. T. Jones, "that it can lead the writer to express more truth, more knowledge about the world as it really is, than any factual statement" (60). In this way, Austen and Eliot have re-lived in different ways through the female protagonists they have created in their novels. They have expressed their aspirations, anguish and anticipations, delivered their judgements, and predicted the possible result of any action through the actions of these female protagonists. Interestingly, female novelists like Charlotte Lucas or Elizabeth Hamilton has created novels, for example, *The Infernal Quixote* (1800), *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) and so on, in which they have been bold enough to present their own philosophy. In presenting their particular viewpoint, these philosophical novelists tend to create characters whose only function in the work is the exposition of the author's philosophy. The main characters thus are totally flat creations. On the contrary, Austen and Eliot blend their personal philosophy with realism and realistic problems in a way that the female characters. On the contrary, Jane Austen and George Eliot have skilfully blended their personal philosophy and aspirations in the three-dimensional portraits of female characters. Created in such a way, female protagonists of the novels of the two novelists may contain some autobiographical elements but it will be more appropriate to typify them as introspective visualizations or characterizations.

In the novels of the male tradition, the female characterization has never attained that much depth as it has got in the novels of these two writers. For



example, Dickens's imagination, in *Great Expectations*, is concerned with the effect Estella has on Pip rather than with how she herself thinks and feels.

On the other hand, contemporary female novelists of Austen and Eliot have developed woman-centered novels but they, in some way or other, become superficial representations. For example, Maria Edgeworth's delineations of active and free-spirited women rather seem to be exceptional and accidental cases in society – not a natural uncommonness. Marilyn Butler in her discussion about Edgeworth's approach figures out that a conservative theme is used in *Camilla* of learning to submit to authority while *Belinda* is precisely developed on an opposite theme of relying on the woman's own judgement. (140-145) The two tendencies reflect on Edgeworth's lack of consistency in presenting the female protagonist's strength of will to follow her own mind. This consistency is well-maintained in Jane Austen and more intensely in George Eliot. Though Butler considers this process of judgement is evidently produced in Austen's later novels, almost all the female protagonists of her novels learn to judge situations accordingly – only the level of intensity may have increased in the later novels.

Jane Austen and George Eliot have preferred to present women's assertiveness in the most realistic flavour and in a realistic ground so that they may not be marginalized as feminine expressions – something out of the reality. Moreover, the two authors have presented women's assertiveness not from the factual point of view but from the elemental level to rouse the general and universal feeling of female assertiveness. For this, the authors have presented the real and general social atmosphere on the one side and have rendered the fundamental feeling of individuality on the other side. The basic authorial hint is always on an inherent conflict between the social atmosphere and the uncommon individualistic traits of the female protagonists in the novels of Austen and Eliot.

The various aspects of the social atmosphere are presented through the actions of the minor characters of the novels, who together create the existing social situation on which the female protagonists are placed contrastingly. Elizabeth, Emma, Fanny, Anne, Dorothea, Maggie, Romola, Esther – all the female protagonists suffer because they feel the inward pressure to act according to their own wishes while facing the pressure of the social domination. Based on this fundamental conflict between social pressure and personal wishes, the lives of these female characters have an almost common pattern. Their life stories go through certain stages, which begin with a female character's constant conflict between reality and self-aspirations. At the second stage, the characters go through errors, misdeeds and wrong judgements that eventually lead to sufferings. However, the time comes at a certain stage when the characters realize their faults and then face their fate. This basic pattern reflects the fact that the female protagonists of both Austen and Eliot's novels go through the process of change, which is based on the authorial suggestion and conceptions. Characters' progress towards change, in Austen's novels, can be interpreted in two ways. On the surface level, the actions and the situations take the path towards better social adjustment and the narrative outlines the female protagonists' journey towards successful marriage – popularly identified as Austen's marriage plots. However, the parallel thematic structure of these characters' actions reveals the characters' progression from error and misunderstanding towards ultimate realization and self-knowledge. In this way, the narrative delineates the characters' social progress and the moral progress at the same time. In case of Eliot's female characters, their actions and the situations do not always take the path towards better social adjustment. In case of Dorothea and Romola, it is a type of compromise while Maggie has failed to absorb the social temperament till the end of her life. Dinah and Esther have been able to adjust in



their social life. But interestingly, the parallel thematic structures of these characters' lives have a common pattern, which is the same as Austen's. The actions of all of these characters of Austen and Eliot's, move from the state of misjudgement and misconceptions towards ultimate realization. Thus the basic authorial implication behind such characterization rests on the structure of life – from blindness towards enlightenment, from moral confusion to ultimate realization and so on. The authorial implication also lies in this pattern, which begins with the character's dissatisfactions in the social life.

### **1. Women Dissatisfied with Society and Society with Them**

Judging and scrutinizing the overall actions of the female protagonists depicted in the novels of Austen and Eliot, and relating them to the actions and reactions of the other characters of the same novels, two significant things can be detected. Firstly, it is evident that the female protagonists have a feeling of dissatisfaction inherent in them. Secondly, the other characters who represent society (except those notable male characters with uncommon attitude and sympathetic towards these female characters) criticize the actions of these female characters.

Again, two aspects are prominent in the characteristics of these female protagonists: they think differently and they act uncommonly. Their atypical thoughts and concepts are illuminated through the narrative while their unusual approach is projected through selected scenes of the novels. However, the thoughts and attitudes of these characters are different in comparison to the general approach of the characters who represent society and signify social acceptance. On the other hand, the basic uncommon trait that is inputted in almost all the female protagonists of these novels is the tendency to retain individuality, which



inevitably faces social criticism and suppression. This is the main cause of dissatisfaction of these female protagonists.

“The Prelude” of the novel *Middlemarch* is a message of the author directly to the reader in which Dorothea is asserted as St. Theresa of the modern age. This whole authorial statement proves that the authorial sympathy is upon this character of the novel. Also, the first chapter of the novel includes a short introductory description from the narrator about the unusual approach of Dorothea. The narrator describes,

Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (6)

This is strengthened by placing the contrasting character Celia as the sister of Dorothea. While Celia attends to every social codes and customs, Dorothea does not follow them, which may be interpreted as her dislike of social codes. The novel includes several scenes that reflect on her unusual lifestyle, for example, she wears simple dresses and denies wearing necklaces. Quite naturally, society disapproves of such unusual conduct of Dorothea – the narrator’s comments and direct or indirect reference to the opinions of other characters jointly represent social criticism. The narrator states, “Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection” (6). Moreover, Dorothea has a profound wish to learn more than “something beyond the shallows of ladies’-school literature” (20), and she dislikes the fact that women are constrained from the scope for higher education. She wants to convey her own

thoughts and convictions, but she is not allowed or encouraged to express her feelings, which is one of most significant causes of her dissatisfaction.

Similarly Maggie, in *The Mill on the Floss*, at such an early age, discovers that girls are not allowed to pursue education beyond certain point and according to Mr. Stelling, women are “quick and shallow” (151). Her situation is presented in two ways: through narrating her thoughts, feelings and actions and through focusing on the reproach she faces. Firstly, the narrator hints at the fact that Maggie becomes upset because she does not find any encouragement for her passions – she remains restless as she cannot communicate with others to reveal her aspirations. Her dissatisfaction even grows more when she realizes that a girl, cannot learn everything like a boy. Maggie becomes disheartened and “she had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called ‘quick’ all her little life, and now it appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority. ... And Maggie was so oppressed by this dreadful destiny that she had no spirit for a retort” (151). Her unusual approach is related to such mental dissatisfactions. Maggie, as the narrator records, “...didn’t want her hair to look pretty – that was out of the question – she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl and not to find fault with her” (62). Naturally, Maggie faces scorns and reproaches for her unusual behaviour from others. In fact, she becomes used to “listening to a chorus of reproach and derision” (65) – Aunt Pullet thinks she is “more like a gypsy nor ever”; even her mother blames her and says, “She’s a naughty child, as’ll break her mother’s heart”(65). At one level, life for Maggie becomes so unbearable that she decides to run away, because she thinks, Gypsydom is “her only refuge” (103). The title of the Chapter eleven of Book one significantly refers to Maggie’s dissatisfaction: “Maggie tries to run away from her shadow”(103). This is perhaps



the highest stage of rebellion, generated from an internal force of dissatisfaction with her social existence.

This matter of women's discomfort in social life is repetitively presented through the female protagonists of Eliot's novels. The situations of these novels show that women, when search for a meaning in life, face obstruction in every step of their lives. However, Eliot reflects on the other means of discomfort of women. For example, Romola's dissatisfaction grows in her marital life, on the moral ground. She tries to run away from her position of wife-hood as she cannot bear her existence as she is. Romola wants to leave her home and husband, when she finds out the true nature of Tito, who betrays his father-in-law by selling the late scholar's library selfishly for material gain. Romola's marital dissatisfaction thus grew from her realization that Tito prefers financial growth to morality.

In contrast to Romola, financial condition bears more significance for Gwendolen and so dissatisfaction in Gwendolen's life comes when she faces poverty unexpectedly. The narrator describes her first reaction when hearing about their decreased financial condition: "It was almost as difficult for her to believe suddenly that her position had become one of poverty and of humiliating dependence, as it would have been to get into the strong current of her blooming life the chill sense that her death would really come" (*Daniel* 9). Apart from such situational dissatisfaction, Gwendolen has her anxieties as woman. The narrator reflects on her thoughts: "... her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfillment of her ambition; ... Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum" (*Daniel* 21). However, Gwendolen is also aware of the social significance of matrimony, which she feels that she cannot avoid: "Of course



marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs--a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead" (*Daniel* 21). Above all these conflicts in her mind, the dominating urge within her has been to be able to live according to her wishes: "She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living, seemed pleasant to her fancy. (*Daniel* 21)

Such discontentment with the existing lifestyle troubles Esther too, though "She was proud that the best-born and handsomest girls at school had always said that she might be taken for a born lady ... her irreproachable nails and delicate wrist, were the objects of delighted consciousness to her" (*Felix* 41). This apparent contentment belong to the outer layer of her mind, while her inner soul is troubled by the existential dissatisfaction. The narrator describes,

But she was not contented with her life: she seemed to herself to be surrounded with ignoble, uninteresting conditions, from which there was no issue; for even if she had been unamiably enough to give her father pain deliberately, it would have been no satisfaction to her to go to Treby church, and visibly turn her back on Dissent. It was not religious differences, but social differences, that Esther was concerned about ... (*Felix Holt* 40)

Thus, in case of Esther and all the other female protagonists of Eliot's novels, there is a feeling of strong discontentment related to the characters' existence and identity in the society. The characters are dissatisfied with the existing social situation they face and they wish for a change in their lives to overcome the conflicting situation between social rules and the individual wishes. They constantly feel the urge to strengthen individuality, which drives them towards restless actions and are the main reasons of their uncontrolled passionate outbursts.

This intensity of passion is not observed in Jane Austen's protagonists as they are never so reactive like Eliot's Maggie or Dorothea, but Austen's protagonists too feel the inner urge to retain their own individuality and face the outer social obstructions against the fulfilment of personal wishes. However, one major difference between the protagonists of Austen's and Eliot's novels is in terms of the characters' awareness of any dissatisfaction. Dorothea, Maggie, Esther and Romola – the characters of Eliot's novels can sense uneasiness and that makes them more dissatisfied with their situation. The female protagonists of Austen's novels – Elizabeth and Emma – are not truly aware of their dissatisfaction or problem but they are not comfortable in life. The actions and reactions of these characters indirectly reflect their dissatisfaction. For example, Elizabeth's uneasiness is evident in every sequence – she seems not convinced with the comments of her sister about the Bingleys, she differs with Charlotte's views about marriage. Also the attitude of the upper-class that shows superiority and arrogance seems attacking to her self-respect and ego. Her feeling of self-respect gets hurt more or less on every occasion when she meets the proud rich. She is angry because of Darcy's haughty behaviour, but still she "could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified" her (*PP* 67). This is why, at times, Elizabeth seems to be proud which is in reality, the feeling of extreme self-respect and egoism. She bursts out on any attack in her personality. The more she is affected the more she becomes sensitive to any attitude. Her dialogues recorded in the novels projects her boldness and individualistic strength. For example, she says to Jane, "You shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning and principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger, security for happiness" (*PP* 174).



Perhaps, Emma gets the best opportunity to practice what Elizabeth forcefully continues to believe in – Emma acts as she wishes to. Therefore, to say Emma dissatisfied would seem almost contradictory and also the opposite to what the narrator of *Emma* asserts in the very beginning of the novel: “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her” (5). Even so, Emma’s actions and attitudes reflect on her inherent restlessness of which she herself is not aware but searches for satisfaction in anything she does. She feels for the uncomfortable position of women in the society and so tries to create better situations by making matches between men and women. Or perhaps, she yearns to see herself successful and so in her illusion, thinks herself as the best match-maker and expert in reading people’s mind. Yet, the situations around her almost always have been very much favourable for her.

In contrast to Emma, Catherine struggles to adjust with the society of Bath that is unfamiliar and a new experience for her. Naturally, the first few days in that place Catherine remains dejected and dissatisfied. The narrative report in Chapter Nine serializes the actions of Catherine to highlight her moments of dissatisfaction and so begins: “The progress of Catherine’s unhappiness from the events of the evening, was as follows. It appeared first in a general dissatisfaction with everybody about her, while she remained in the rooms, which speedily brought on considerable weariness and a violent desire to go home” (*NA* 36).

Fanny in *Mansfield Park* is put on an unfamiliar and unfriendly atmosphere. Especially, when she enters Mansfield Park for the first time, everything has been new and uncomfortable to her. For many days, Fanny remains



dejected, alone and disheartened in the big house. Yet, she always has the strength of individuality within her, though according to Andrew H. Wright,

The heroines of all other novels [of Jane Austen]... have a certain rebelliousness – from the violent woman-of-feeling Marianne Dashwood and the Gothic-infected Catherine Morland, through the prejudiced Elizabeth Bennet and the God-playing Emma Woodhouse, to the finally independent Anne Elliot. Only Fanny is a simple accepting figure, and the message is : good girls come out best, after all. (128)

However, Fanny too has a certain rebelliousness which remains hidden. Her age and her entrance in a totally new and unfamiliar place do not grant her any confidence and surely make her weak and dejected. Still, the rebellion in her sometimes works and she gets the courage to deny or refuse to act in the play the Bertram siblings plan to stage. Contrastingly, Anne Elliot lacks courage to establish her own decisions – she concentrates less on her own feelings and more on other's feelings, for which she too feels uncomfortable in her life.

On the whole, the selected actions of the female protagonists of Austen and Eliot's novels reflect the inner discomfort that prevail within them, which generates in every case, from their inability to adjust in the social life – inability to grasp the social customs and follow them, inability to communicate or interact with the people surrounding them, inability to express their passion and fulfil their ambition. In one sentence, the conflict is between women's social situation and inherent aspirations.

## **2. Errors and Misunderstandings**

While dissatisfaction is the inherent current creating pressure for the female protagonists of the novels of Austen and Eliot, outward expressions bear the characteristic of self-confidence. This may be interpreted as an action to retain individuality forcefully. From internal remorse, and an awareness of not having the

air of comfort, the female protagonists act deliberately to establish their personal wishes and feelings. Incidentally, errors and misunderstandings collide with such mental urge. Both Austen and Eliot present this gradual advancement of actions from dissatisfaction to erroneous acts and misunderstanding in almost a common pattern to reflect on two basic problems of these characters: misunderstanding of facts and obsession with imagination. For the errors of misunderstanding and misconception, how much the female protagonists can be blamed and how much the social restraints are responsible remains a matter of debate. The mistakes they do are basically reactions to social constraints and a kind of impulsive action to retain the existence of the selves. This urge to retain one's individuality happens from self-respect.

First of all, the authorial indication is upon the characters' inability to understand the real situation around them. The narratives of these novels mainly present some selected acts of the female protagonists that point out the gradual process of developing self-confidence or to be more appropriate, over-confidence, that leads to misunderstanding of situations and forming misconceptions, and that eventually leads them towards erroneous acts. This process of misunderstanding to erroneous acts also has its root in some pre-conceptions innate in the female characters. Having certain mindset, which produces confidence in them, these characters perceive and react to certain situations accordingly. This becomes the first step towards self-confidence and then misunderstandings. The outward expression that reflects self-confidence in Elizabeth and Emma is inwardly an attempt to establish their own points of view in the face of social dominance.

Self-confidence is present in these female characters in different levels, which depends on how much wrongly they form some pre-conceptions. For example, Elizabeth Bennet's misjudgement of Darcy is based primarily on her



negative feeling about the rich and their arrogance and pride. Similarly, Emma's miscalculations are based on her thought that she has the ability to understand people's minds and can arrange marriage between couples. She takes the credit of making the match between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor when she says, "... I made the match myself. I made the match, you know, four years ago; and to have it take place, and be proved in the right, when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for any thing" (*PP* 10). On the other hand, Dorothea marries Casaubon to be the mate of a scholar and thus having her own wishes fulfilled. Dorothea's distrust on social men and a thought that a man of studies has an enlightened mind who supports women's freedom of learning. Dorothea has been very much confident that she will have total support from a scholar husband in fulfilling her wishes.

In this way, all these characters remain confident about their own views and ability to judge certain situation and until their realization, never feel the need to re-judge their assumptions. This confidence or over-confidence automatically transforms into pride in Both Elizabeth and Emma. A. Walton Litz says about Elizabeth Bennet: "...Elizabeth's initial prejudice against him [Darcy] is rooted in pride of her own quick perceptions" (102). Elizabeth is always confident about her judgement, which is her first and the most serious fault. Nevertheless to measure in degrees, Emma exceeds in her self-confidence – she not only believes in her concepts and judgements but also convinces and dominates others in her way. The authorial voice is critical about Emma and comments on the actual reason behind her confidence:

The real evils indeed of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so



unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her (*Emma* 13).

For Emma, richness or wealth assures her everything. Having wealth and fortune, she is confident that she will always be respectable and independent to do as she wishes.

When the female characters, unable to scrutinize the real situation properly, depend upon assumption and create an imaginative world and take it as reality, they unavoidably misunderstand situations. Perhaps the character Emma in Austen's *Emma* goes through this problem more than any other female protagonists of the novels of Austen and Eliot. This is because, Emma cannot identify the difference between appearance and reality, and so she depends totally on her assumptions, on her interpretation of events that is based on the initial appearance of events. However, this matter of dependence is one of the major problems of these female protagonists. The narrative reports and sequences of actions together show that these characters have confidence in their own perceptions that are ironically dependant on some other aspects. For example, Elizabeth listens to Wickham and Mr. Denny about Darcy's character, Emma depends on the outward actions and activities, Fanny depends on others' comments and feelings, Anne depends on her father and aunt, Dorothea depends on Casaubon to fulfill her wishes as Romola depends on Tito and Savonarola, Dinah depends on the religious conceptions and Gwendolen depends on social conceptions.

Secondly, the authorial hint is on the problem of the characters' mingling imagination with reality. Obsession with imagination is the major problem of the protagonists of Eliot's novels. The character of Maggie displays this aspect in the most intense way. From her childhood, she has supported her inner feelings of passion to reasoning and she has "... never in her life spoken from the lips merely,

so that she must necessarily appear absurd to more experienced ladies from the excessive feeling she was apt to throw into very trivial incidents" (*The Mill* 386). At a certain stage of her life, passion rules over her, which brings the ultimate destruction of her life. Maggie feels the intimate hours in the boat with Stephen, the narrator describes, "Stephen's passionate words made the vision of such a life more fully present to her than it had ever been before; and the vision for the time excluded all realities..." (*The Mill* 481).

In the same way, Dorothea excludes all realities and wanders in the world of her imagination. She misunderstands Casaubon but more than that, she misunderstands reality. Obsessed with her imagination, Dorothea overlooks the real situation and craves to see her dream come true. The narrator describes her situation:

All Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level. The impetus with which inclination became resolution was heightened by those little events of the day which had roused her discontent with the actual conditions of her life. (*Middlemarch* 36)

Dorothea fancies her life after marrying Casaubon as "a fuller life." (*Middlemarch* 36) She can see only the world of her imagination and becomes completely blind to the reality. For her, the marriage proposal has been the gateway through which she is going to reach her dream world and leave behind the pressures of reality. The narrator portrays the state of Dorothea's mind: "She was going to have room for energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits." (*Middlemarch* 36) In such a state, she fails to understand the realities of marital life and only imagines herself as the assistant or help-mate of Casaubon. The narrator describes, "She filled up all blanks with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she



interpreted the works of Providence, ... there are many blanks left in the weeks of courtship, which a loving faith fills with happy assurance" (*Middlemarch* 61).

Dorothea blindly searches for a scope to fulfil her ambition and she sees Casaubon as the only mate, who can guide her towards her goal. The more she becomes confident about her decisions the less she understands the reality and the less she can find the aspects of this relationship. On the other hand, Romola too, like Dorothea, has made the mistake of searching her ideal world within reality. She has lived in a world of wisdom and spirituality as a result of which she misunderstands people and situations. She misunderstands Tito and thinks Savonarola as the supreme preacher.

One noticeable thing is that Jane Austen and George Eliot never deny the influence of the outward stimuli upon the character's mind and therefore they design the plots differently to put the characters in various conditions that signify the cause and effect relation of every action of the characters. For example, the financial condition of Emma and Dorothea has been such that it granted them liberty to choose whatever they want. Emma can make charitable visits, patronize the poor, and do whatever she feels will be a worthy task. For Dorothea, it is her intention to enlighten herself more. However, Dorothea does not get any support from others – she remains all alone. On the other hand, Maggie has not been in a stable financial situation. She faces immense pressure from the family and so her mind remains divided between her duty and desire. She struggles and becomes free only at the cost of her life. Elizabeth Bennet has gone through quite a similar situation too, when the family estate has been entailed and the five sisters need to be married and well-established. But Elizabeth wins over the inner-conflicts and is always confident about what she wants, though she makes mistakes in understanding people.



Anyhow, the basic problem of all these female characters appears to be their inability to understand the social situation. Austen's indication is on some characteristic faults of the female protagonists, which force them to misunderstand and misjudge a situation. While, Eliot hints at the characters' tendency to depend on imagination and therefore misunderstand reality. In both cases, the characters forcefully urge to come out of the social bondage and to have a meaningful life drives them to react in certain ways. The fact remains that the inability to cope with the social mentality is itself considered as an error in the eyes of society.

### 3. Struggle and Realizations

Two types of situation is observed in the novels of Austen and Eliot regarding the actions of the female protagonists: firstly, some struggle without realizing the reason of their turbulence and without having the feeling of how much they are responsible for the situation they are facing; secondly, there are some who can realize their part in the suffering and so they remorse on realizing the error and also the pain of its after-effects at the same time. However significantly, this phase marks the turning point in the female protagonists' lives. At this stage, these characters gain their first self-knowledge, which is accompanied by the understanding of reality. As a result, a drastic change occurs in their thought-process and attitudes.

The phases before and after realization of errors have been in stark contrast in case of the character of Emma in *Emma*. Dramatic change of her feelings is notified through the narrative – once her mind has been concurring by confidence and certainty, which changes in a feeling of humiliation as soon as she understands the reality. The whole of her imagined world turns upside down in a day or two. To

her, the realization of not being right brings the catastrophe. The narrator describes her mental situation:

She was bewildered amidst the confusion of all that had rushed on her within the last few hours. Every moment had brought a fresh surprise; and every surprise must be a matter of humiliation to her. How to understand it all! How to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself, and living under! The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart! ... in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly; ... that she was wretched, and should probably find this day the beginning of wretchedness (*Emma* 386).

Emma struggles to adjust with this state of ultimate realization. She becomes surprised and this surprise resulted from sudden realization of her faults is painful to her.

In case of Elizabeth, her part of realization has been two-fold: firstly, it has been an inner awareness of her own misjudgement and prejudice and secondly, her understanding of the inner facts. After reading Darcy's explanation of the facts through his letter, Elizabeth begins to realize her faults and her sudden reaction has been of a mixed feeling. The narrator records, "Astonishment, apprehension, and even horror, oppressed her. She wished to discredit it entirely, repeatedly exclaiming, 'This must be false! This cannot be! This must be the grossest falsehood!'" (*PP* 233). The whole part of her struggle has been of her feelings – the feeling of being wrong has created a mental shock within her and "she grew absolutely ashamed of herself. – Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (*PP* 236).

In case of Catherine, she has been forcefully driven back to realization by Henry. This sudden realization of her misunderstanding of reality makes her bewildered. She has been ashamed of her own fault and also has been anxious of her lost impression. The narrator describes, "Most grievously was she humbled. Most bitterly did she cry. It was not only with herself that she was sunk – but with

Henry. Her folly, which now seemed even criminal, was all exposed to him, and he must despise her for ever ... The absurdity of her curiosity and her fears, could they ever be forgotten? She hated herself more than she could express" (*NA* 129)

However, Dorothea does not go through sudden realization like Emma, Elizabeth or Catherine but it is a gradual process. After her marriage with Casaubon, Dorothea begins to feel uncomfortable bit by bit – the narrative highlights various occasions where Dorothea is seen struggling with the reality she faces. Every bit of struggle brings every bit of realization for her. The narrator describes, "To Dorothea's inexperienced sensitiveness, it seemed like a catastrophe, changing all prospects; ..." (*Middlemarch* 168). Little by little, Dorothea understands the difference between her imaginary world and reality. The narrator notifies those specific moments of her understanding such as this: "Today she had begun to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr. Casaubon ..." (*Middlemarch* 175). Still, for a long time, Dorothea tries to console with her situation and to take everything easily because this seems to be the better option for her – "...it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon..." (*Middlemarch* 175-176). Yet, even after Dorothea fully realizes that reality is the opposite to what she has expected, she nourishes her dream within her, as if after finding out everything clearly, she still would love to see her dream come true. The narrator describes: "As for Dorothea, nothing could have pleased her more unless it had been a miraculous voice pronouncing Mr. Casaubon the wisest and worthiest among the son of men. In that case, her tottering faith would have become firm again" (*Middlemarch* 179).

Also, Maggie's realization of her fault has been quick and sudden, which alarms her immediately after she comes out of her dream world. She can sense that



she has to suffer and understands why she has to suffer. The narrator records Maggie's immediate realization: "the irrevocable wrong that must blot her life had been committed; she had brought sorrow into the lives of others, into the lives that were knit up with hers by trust and love" (*The Mill* 483). From her first realization, Maggie struggles at every moment as an internal conflict between dutifulness and passion is always going on: "She had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty and had made herself an outlawed soul with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion" (*The Mill* 483). Even Maggie can feel how much she has to bear, when the whole society around her becomes bitter. The narrative, more than once, focuses on Maggie's lonely hours to hint at her lonesome and helpless state in the world. The narrator says, "In the second week of September, Maggie was again sitting in her lonely room, battling with the old shadowy enemies that were forever slain and rising again" (*The Mill* 523).

The narrative sequences of both Austen and Eliot's novels monitor every stage of the female protagonists' mental growth from error to realization. These characters are taken as focalizers for the most part, as a result of which the readers can monitor the change in thoughts and feelings and the mental journey from illusion towards reality. For example, in case of Anne Elliot, the whole situation is presented from her point of view to illustrate the changes of her mental state throughout. Readers sympathize with Anne when she struggles because she assumes that Captain Wentworth has an affair with Louisa Musgrove. She realizes her love for him at a time when he is far from her. A. Walton Litz comments, "... our real interest lies in Anne's struggle to overcome the barriers of social isolation and communicate with the man she once knew so well. It is for this reason that Jane Austen presents almost all the action from her point-of-view" (156).

#### 4. Fate

The concluding phase of the actions of these female protagonists depicted in the novels of Austen and Eliot show the results of their uncommon actions in life. And, in every case, individual choice is celebrated and the prospect of love – spiritual love – wins over all the restraints of society. Also, this phase of their lives ensures their ultimate satisfaction that comes through self- knowledge, self- redemption, realization and understanding of reality. Jane Austen’s female protagonists reach to the level of ultimate satisfaction through the victory of their individuality and love in life. Elizabeth, Emma, Anne, Fanny, Catherine, Elinor and Marianne – everyone is happily married in the end and thus is settled in their lives. This has been a kind of reward for their renewed life as they have overcome their faults and have gained self-knowledge. The authorial implication in patterning the lives of the female protagonists from struggle to ultimate peace is that the understanding of self and society eventually brings peace and happiness in women’s life. However, George Eliot’s protagonists characteristically have been extremists and have chosen unusual paths and so their lives take extreme and unusual endings, which bring ultimate satisfaction for them. Although Maggie Tulliver has struggled till the end of her life – only if the re-union with her brother shown in the scene of their drowning is taken as a scope of ultimate peace – Maggie has got satisfaction in the end. It is because, the authorial hint is that “brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted, living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love and roamed the dasied fields together” (*The Mill* 534). Here, the authorial implication is on the other fact that passion cannot win over social life and therefore, Maggie wins back her passion only on the verge of her death. However,



Maggie realizes this during the last days of her life. She understands that there is no scope for restoration in her present state and so "...she must begin a new life in which she would have to rouse herself to receive new impressions – and she was so unspeakably, sickeningly weary!" (*The Mill* 525). Though finally she gets the chance to grasp happiness by uniting with Stephen, she decides to "...bear it till death..." (*The Mill* 528). Thus, in the final days of her life, Maggie gains the knowledge of self and society around her, which she decides to bear till death.

Similarly, Dorothea also decides to make a compromise with her ambitions. She surely understands that she has failed to do anything worthy as she always has wished, but her mental state has reached a position that she is now ready to be happy with what she has got. The narrator says,

Still, she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw, and he would have held it the greatest shame as well as sorrow to him if she repented. They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it. No life would have been possible to Dorothea which was not filled with emotion, and she had now a life filled also with beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself. Will became an ardent public man ... Dorothea could have liked nothing better, since wrongs existed, than that her husband should be in the thick of a struggle against them, and that she should give him wifely help." (*Middlemarch* 686).

Dorothea could only regain her normal needs after marrying Ladislaw, a love in her life and satisfaction, but the inner-felt desire to achieve knowledge and be more enlightened remains a wish and perhaps, later on, the wish, too, has been no more. Contrastingly, the character of Romola and Gwendolen finally leads a life of purpose – they eventually find the path of humanity and spirituality. However they have been through a compromise too as they go far from their marital life.

As a matter of fact, the supreme achievement of all these characters is their right to wish, feel and express in their own way, coming out of the regulated social



thinking that the secondary female characters show. The authorial support has been with these rebellious attempts against society or social rules and customs though the life-stories of these female protagonists declare that individual has to compromise in her life and recognize the all-prevailing social power.

### **(C) The Home and the World: Female Characters in a Larger Perspective**

Female characters in the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot belong to a detailed regional setting and act typically as inhabitants of that setting. However, regionalism never gets prominence in these novels. Regional elements simply form the outward shape of these novels to present a model of society. And, the regional qualities of the actions of the female characters simply maintain the atmosphere of the particular setting and work for the development of the storyline. The sequence of actions in these novels, with the prominence of thematic rendition, is arranged in such a way that the readers' attention gets diverted from the regional facts to reflect on the facts related to fundamental feelings as female and as human beings.

In terms of action, the female characters are of two types. The first group of secondary female characters, whose actions remain unchanged from the beginning till the end in the novels and the second group consists of the female protagonists whose change in thoughts and attitudes become the centre of attention in the novels. Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Collins, Lady Catherine, Lady Middleton of Austen's novels and Mrs. Poyser, Mrs. Tulliver, Mrs. Transome and so on of Eliot's novels, who represent the first group, though project some regional attitudes, the narratives include those actions of these female characters that are fundamental and universal expressions. On the other hand, the actions of the second group of female characters illustrate the gradual change in attitudes of

women. Elizabeth, Emma, Elinor, Marianne, Anne, Fanny, Maggie, Dorothea, Hetty, Romola, Esther – these female protagonists of the novels of Austen and Eliot mainly reflect the psychological ups and downs of female minds living in a society. The narrative situations focus on the parallel state of outward behavior and internal mentality. Thus, the regional aspects of the novels remain in the background and the whole attention is on the basic and elementary feelings of female species.

From the point of view of readers' response, these female characters in some way or other prove to be more appealing. These characters get the readers' sympathy and the readers overlook the regional traces present in them. Since the authors have stressed on the fundamental psychological aspects of the characters and therefore the readers of any age and time can sympathize with these characters in terms of feelings, emotions and reactions to any situation. The narratives map out the expressions and reactions of the female characters in different circumstances. The concentration is upon the mental state of the characters to explore women's stream of consciousness, where there is no barrier of place and time. The narratives project the simplest female emotions and expressions and monitor how complexities develop from them. Also, the narrative structure and arrangements present the actions of the female characters in a way that the regional aspects become subsided and the universal elements get prominence.

Jane Austen's method of exploring the female mind seems to be of a psychologist and every description of the actions of these female characters seems to be a case study. For example, the narrator of *Sense and Sensibility* records Marianne's emotional state with every detail of her expressions:

Her [Marianne's] eyes were red and swollen; and it seemed as if her tears were even then restrained with difficulty. She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time,



on her mother's silently pressing her hand with tender compassion, her small degree of fortitude was quite overcome – she burst into tears and left the room. ... The violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. (80)

However, when George Eliot portrays such emotional state of women in her novels, her approach is more of a philosopher. For example, in *Middlemarch*, the narrator records a situation where Dorothea is sobbing. The narrative stresses less on the change in expressions of Dorothea and more on the impressionistic aspects of such a situation. First, the narrative highlights on the universality of such emotional outburst of women. The narrator describes the situation: "I am sorry to add that she [Dorothea] was sobbing bitterly, with such abandonment to this relief of an oppressed heart as a woman habitually controlled by pride on her own account and thoughtfulness for others will sometimes allow herself when she feels seemingly alone" (160). The narrative drives the readers to observe the situation or the reaction of the young woman as something very common and universal. The narrator comments, "Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities and left to 'find their feet' among them, while their elders go about their business." (161). Finally, the voice of a philosopher intrudes and declares, "Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual" (161-62). This statement hints on two aspects: the authorial voice firstly, points out that Dorothea's situation is representative of the common situation people face – the sudden mental shock resulted by the reversal of an expected future – and secondly, attracts the readers' attention to the fact that such "not unusual" events are not seriously taken into consideration. The implication is that such mental turmoil though men and women commonly feel in



their lives do not consider trivial emotions in the literary page to capture the states of mental unrest that gradually grow towards complexity. Eliot relates this state of a female mind to the universal state of human mind in general and thus makes the readers enable to sympathize with the situation irrespective of gender.

The narrative arrangements of the novels of Austen and Eliot include those events of the female characters' lives that serially and sequentially show one situation as the effect of the previous one. Added to this, the exploration of the mental condition in a parallel way shows how the actions of these female characters are reactions of an internal unrest of mind. The stimulus behind the condition of unrest is the aspiration to see the world of imagination in reality. In this way, the thoughts, actions and reactions of these female protagonists highlight some common or universal aspirations and anxieties of women that are present in women irrespective of time, place, and race.

Female minds have internal unrest because they nourish within themselves a dream to see their world of imagination in reality. For example, the narrator describes Maggie, who

...was a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirsty for all knowledge; with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her; with a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it. (*The Mill* 238)

Some readers may take this as a particular situation of the character named Maggie, but to guide them, the narrator-philosopher intrudes and comments on the universality of the situation: "No wonder, when there is this contrast between the outward and the inward, that painful collisions come of it" (*The Mill* 238).

On the other hand, Austen as a psychologist, shows how repression of personal pleasures, resulted from such conflict between outward situation and

inward state, creates a strong impact upon the female mind. To use the concept of Freud, the repressed pleasures or feelings are transported into different channels of mind. For this reason, Emma feels relieved in her illusion of arranging successful engagements. Again, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, takes relief in the fantasies of the Gothic horrors. She tries to escape from the worldly matters for a while and engross solely to such imaginative world. The narrator hints at her mental situation:

...Catherine was then left to the luxury of a raised, restless, and frightened imagination over the pages of Udolpho, lost from all worldly concerns of dressing and dinner, incapable of soothing Mrs. Allen's fears on the delay of an expected dress-maker, and having only one minute in sixty to bestow even on the reflection of her own felicity, in being already engaged for the evening. (30)

Thus, several instances of Austen and Eliot's novels point out that roaming between imagination and reality is a characteristic pattern of young women's minds. George Eliot signifies the moments of the lives of women, when imagination and dreams rule over them and they totally forget reality. Eliot describes the situation of Maggie when in her life, the passionate impulses win over realistic concerns: ...they were like nectar held close to thirsty lips; there was there must be, then, a life for mortals here below which was not hard and chill in which affection would no longer be self-sacrifice (*The Mill* 481). The narrative also detects a sense of agitation in the character's mind, which is always active under such pleasant feeling. Maggie enjoys the moment, but there is a "dim consciousness" that it is a momentary situation and "that the morrow must bring back the old life of struggle" (*The Mill* 481-482).

In this way, both Austen and Eliot have projected female minds experimentally but their ways of experimentation have been skilfully different and therefore their methods demand separate discussions. First to consider Jane



Austen, she has never been an analyst like George Eliot. Austen's stress is on representation – main parts of her narrative management are narrative reports and mimetic representation, which includes selective use of characters' dialogues and scenes depicting characters' action through the balanced use of mimetic and diegetic methods. Technically, Austen explores the relation between the character's thoughts and actions through the use of these narrative tools in proper time and place. Babb refers to the importance of Austen's use of dialogue, which, according to him "reveals her characters in depth and shows them engaged in the most fundamental activities of personality" (5). Yet, the use of dialogues and narrative reports concurrently bears significance too. Use of dialogues only cannot reveal the true personality of the character. There remains a long gap between what the character truly feels and what the character expresses or rather asserts. Social codes and norms regulate and control the tone and matter of conversation and expressing one's thoughts freely was not been considered a good manner in Austen's time. Babb comments, "...even supposing that manners are not a necessarily limited subject, we still need to face the charge that polite conversation must automatically be limited in its scope, intensity, and significance" (5). The novels of Austen highlight that honest expressions and excitement in speech have always been absent or rather suppressed in conversation because formal greetings and speeches of comfort and appraisals have been the accepted way. Therefore, there is no way to explore inner feelings of a character when her expressions are simulated. Babb further points out, "Indeed the issues in these conversations are vital, although the tone of the speakers remains almost always decorously social" (6). However, simultaneous verbalization of the character's thought-process through narrative signifies the gap between the inherent feelings of a character and



her revelation of them. The artificiality of the speeches signifies how much a person has to repress her true feelings.

Austen's method of creating dramatic scenes of actions through the use of both dialogues and narrative reports has been functional in characterizing the female protagonists of the novels. For example, this method makes possible for the readers to understand the character of Emma. This is because Emma's mind remains always active in plotting events and making matches between young men and young ladies and for this, she has to be pretentious in appearance. Thus, Emma's outward expressions and actions and thought-process are in stark contrast to each other. The other characteristic of Emma is that she appears to be very much confident about her conceptions, judgements, and actions. While quarrelling with Mr. Knightley about Harriet, Emma seems strong enough in her tone of conversation, and at one stage, she declares, "We think so very differently on this point, Mr. Knightley, that there can be no use in canvassing it. We shall only be making each other more angry" (*Emma* 52). However, through the narrative report of Emma's mind, the readers can be aware that though Emma is confident about her judgements, Mr. Knightley's attacks make her a little uneasy, partly because Emma has a good notion about Knightley and his comments and partly because deep inside her heart there is a sense of confusion working. The narrator describes Emma's state of mind,

Emma ... tried to look cheerfully unconcerned, but was really feeling uncomfortable ... She did not report what she had done; she still thought herself a better judge of such a point of female right and refinement than he could be; but yet she had a sort of habitual respect for his judgement in general, which made her dislike having it so loudly against her" (*Emma* 52).

After Knightley leaves, Emma begins to feel more uncomfortable and, she cannot force herself to be confident about her concepts now. The narrator mirrors her

mental state, “Emma remained in a state of vexation...She did not always feel so absolutely satisfied with herself, so entirely convinced that her opinions were right, and her adversary’s wrong,” (*Emma* 53). In this way, the distance between Emma’s inner thoughts and appearance is clarified while retaining narrative flexibility between verbalization of Emma’s thoughts and depiction of her expressions and revelation through free indirect speech.

Moreover in Austen’s novels, the narrative reports expose the different layers of the character’s mind one by one. Taken from the three consecutive paragraphs in *Mansfield Park*, the following extracts are examples of how narratives reveal the intricacies of a character’s mind:

Fanny, being always a very courteous listener, and often the only listener at hand, came in for the complaints and distresses of most of them. (147)

Fanny believed herself to derive as much innocent enjoyment from the play as any of them;”... (148)

Many uncomfortable, anxious, apprehensive feelings she certainly had; but with all these, and other claims on her time and attention, she was as far from finding herself without employment or utility amongst them, as without a companion in uneasiness; quite as far from having no demand on her leisure as on her compassion. The gloom of her first anticipations was proved to have been unfounded. She was occasionally useful to all; she was perhaps as much at peace as any. (149)

The first extract narrates how the character of Fanny always appears attentive to others. The second reflects on the outer layer of Fanny’s mind, where there is always a desire to cope with the atmosphere she is in. But deep in her heart, Fanny bears uneasiness, which is narrated in the third extract. Such verbalisation of Fanny’s mind has been inevitable to understand the real character because, in conversation, Fanny has always been “most civil” (151) or at other times silent, and as a result, her thoughts do not come out through her speeches.

Then again for Marianne, who always “have erred against every commonplace notion of decorum! ... have been open and sincere where” she “ought to



have been spiritless, dull, and deceitful” (SS 46), dialogues can reveal much of her character. That is why, in delineating the character of Marianne, Austen has stressed on her expressive dialogues rather than on mind-reading. This is again because, this character thinks less and expresses more. Yet, in case of Elinor, the simultaneous use of narrative report for mind-reading and dialogues shows the character’s ability to conceal her emotions. For example, after hearing about Lucy’s engagement with Mr. Ferrars, Elinor appears to be amazed and shocked within, though she manages to remain firm outwardly. The narrator reports how strongly Elinor controls herself and continues her conversation with Lucy: “Elinor for a few moments remained silent. Her astonishment at what she heard was at first great for words; but at length forcing herself to speak, and to speak cautiously, she said with a calmness of manner which tolerably well concealed her surprise and solicitude” (SS 126).

In this way, Austen’s narrative technique has done the most important task in making the female characters three-dimensional. Austen’s narrative method, known as free-indirect discourse “in which the narrator takes on, without quoting, the thoughts, feelings, and voice of a character” (*Pinch* xvi), has been the way through the female character’s minds. From the level of readers’ response, this method of exploring the characters’ minds has made them sympathize with the characters as the readers can understand or observe the true state of those characters.

Taking George Eliot’s methodology into consideration, female characters are explored and illustrated in a slightly different way. Usually, the female characters are projected from three dimensions – what the character is outwardly observed to do, how the character feels at the same time and the philosophy behind it. For example, Maggie’s mental situation is illustrated in this three-fold way:



Tom was come home and she had thought how happy she should be – and now he was cruel to her. What use of anything if Tom didn't love her? Oh, he was very cruel! Hadn't she wanted to give him the money, and said how very sorry she was? She knew she was naughty to her mother, but she had never been naughty to Tom – had never meant to be naughty to him.

“Oh, he is cruel!” Maggie sobbed aloud, finding a wretched pleasure in the hollow resonance that came through the long empty space of the attic. She never thought of beating or grinding her fetish; she was too miserable to be angry.

These bitter sorrows of childhood – when sorrow is all new and strange, when hope has not yet got wings to fly beyond the days and weeks, and the space from summer to summer seems measureless. (*The Mill* 33)

Maggie's feelings here are portrayed in three dimensions at the same time – first the thoughts of Maggie at the situation, then the report of the narrator observing Maggie, and third the author's philosophical explanation of the situation.

Many a time, in Eliot's novels, the focus is on those moments of a character's life when she is found to be most thoughtful, when she becomes so much engrossed in her thoughts that she even forgets about reality. The narrative in *Middlemarch* illustrates how Dorothea becomes engrossed in her thoughts after reading Casaubon's letter: “Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits” (36). In such cases, the narrative does not simply render the thoughts in the language of the character but it is the tone and language of a philosopher, who, after experiencing the mental situation of the character, explains everything. Not only that, the narrator-philosopher selects those moments of the character that show the contrast in her feelings because of the changed situation. For example, after marriage, Dorothea faces reality, which is totally opposite to what she has thought:

“And by a sad contradiction Dorothea’s ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form. She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, ...all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency, and then again in visions of more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty. Poor Dorothea! she was certainly troublesome – to herself chiefly; but this morning for the first time she had been troublesome to Mr. Casaubon” (165)

Also, the narrator in Eliot’s novels plays a significant role in crystallizing the thoughts of the female character to show the distance between what she thinks in reality and what others guess about her thoughts. In case of Hetty of *Adam Bede*, for example, the narrator visualizes her mental situation when in the party Arthur comes to her: “How Hetty’s heart beat as Arthur approached her! He hardly looked at her today; now he must take her hand. ...She thought she would cry if he gave her no sign of feeling” (*Adam Bede* 321). Arthur takes her hand, and Hetty turns pale when their eyes meet. However, as the narrator observes, Arthur cannot bear the pale look, because “That pale look came upon Arthur like the beginning of a dull pain, which clung to him, though he must dance and smile and joke all the same” (*Adam Bede* 321). The narrator points out the distance between Hetty’s mental state and Arthur’s interpretation of Hetty’s expression. The narrator says, “Hetty’s look did not really mean so much as he [Arthur] thought: it was only the sign of a struggle between the desire for him to notice her, and the dread lest she should betray the desire to others” (*Adam Bede* 322). By projecting these situations, Eliot signifies that such feelings, though they appear to be simple, eventually lead to complex situations.

In this way, female characters are presented with depth and clarity in the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot. The actions of these characters are depicted according to the demands of the storyline. But more than that, the narratives overstress those specific features of the female characters that signify the



authorial thoughts and concepts. Firstly, considering in terms of strength, courage and belief in self, there are two types of female characters in the novels of Austen and Eliot – the weak and the daring. The authorial sympathy is with the characters who dare, though eventually such characters face hardships. The authors' support for the daring women is related with their support in advancement of women and change in society, which are only possible through daring acts aimed to bring change in lifestyle. The authors endorse the daring to protest; they know and they show that such attempts face stern and harsh oppositions and so they always sympathize with the struggling mind. However, Eliot appears to be more encouraging than Austen to those who are bold enough to stand against the existing rules and norms. Virginia Woolf identifies this fire in Eliot and comments,

The ancient consciousness of woman, charged with suffering and sensibility, and for so many ages dumb, seems in them to have brimmed and overflowed and uttered a demand for something – they scarcely know what – for something that is perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence. George Eliot had far too strong an intelligence to temper with those facts, and too broad a humour to mitigate the truth because it was a stern one. (104)

However, Jane Austen has empowered her female protagonist to believe in themselves, to correct themselves and live as they wish, which is a matter of great courage too. It is because, in a strict social structure, the courage to express and stick to personal wishes is itself a great daring for women, who have the least freedom in society. In terms of self-analysis and rectification, the female characters of Austen's novels are more analytical than the characters of Eliot's novels. However, both the authors also show where the character can misjudge and misunderstand, and fall prey to misconceptions, as well as their way to realization. From the level of readers' response, this is the part that most attracts the sympathy of the readers of any place and time, who can relate with the characters' situations.



Two aspects are there: firstly, Jane Austen and George Eliot have not idolized their female characters by putting extra-human qualities in them or have not criticized by presenting them with all negativities as their contemporary women novelists have usually preferred to do. The female characters in Austen and Eliot's novels are of mixed characteristics – both positive and negative – as women in reality, who have their faults with their goodness, and who eventually go through changes. Secondly, the narrative of these novels deals with those emotions of the female characters that are very much fundamental to female consciousness – generated from an urge to gain freedom of thinking and expressing. At the same time, such emotions are felt by any human being, irrespective of gender, time and place. Thus, realism and universalism have made these female characters appealing and familiar to the readers.

### CHAPTER THREE MALE CHARACTERS

If it is about male characterization in Jane Austen and George Eliot, then, it is a matter of difference in approach between the two authors, it is a matter of uniqueness and variation in depicting the male characters, and also, it is a matter of new experience for the readers, since it is experiencing men through women's eyes. It is a new experience even though there have been many other female novelists during Austen's and Eliot's time who have delineated male characters in their novels. Austen and Eliot's delineation of male characters are different from the other novelists in terms of self-confidence and belief in their own perspectives. In depicting Rochester, for example, Charlotte Bronte has not depended fully on her own experience of men but has borrowed the established notion of a Byronic hero. Also, Emily Bronte has borrowed the elements of satanic hero in portraying the character Heathcliff. Moreover, both the characters Rochester and Heathcliff are narrated through homodiegetic narrators, which bring the question of reliability. The narrator in *Wuthering Heights* though is female, cannot deliver the story from the pure female consciousness as she is telling her own story, which surely is influenced by her personal emotions. In narrating Heathcliff, Emily Bronte used both male and female narrators and therefore gender ambiguity remains in the matter of narrative perspective. Whereas, Jane Austen and George Eliot have narrated male characters of their novels purely from the perspective of female consciousness.

Technically in Austen's novels, apart from the use of heterodiegetic female narrator, the narrative arrangements have played a significant role in portraying the male characters from a female perspective. The selected actions of the novels of Austen show male characters firstly in their domestic life and secondly interacting

with female characters. The stress is on men's attitudes towards women in different circumstances that are presented either from the point of view of the female narrator or of any female character of the novel, or of the author directly. Thus in any case, male characters in the novels of Austen are portrayed from the female perspective.

Compared to Austen, George Eliot has presented the male characters of her novels from the female perspective, without putting any limitation in setting or narrative for characterization. The setting of an Eliot novel is sometimes the rural area, the provincial town or even foreign area like Florence and the focus is on houses, parties, churches and even working places. To cover all these areas, where a female narrator does not have any access, Eliot portrays from the perspective of human consciousness. In this way, the author widens her perspective but does not change it because the human consciousness exists at the root of both male and female consciousness. In both Austen and Eliot's novels, the male characters are mainly exposed from outside – there is no verbalization of their thought-process. For example, the character of Darcy of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is exposed only through narrative reports of his attitudes and disposition and his dialogues. Even the male characters' characteristic tone and attitudes are notified as the female observer can see – Eliot's narrator of *Adam Bede* observes the, "...low constrainedly quiet tone which a man uses when he is determined to suppress agitation" (459). Thus the readers get the outward view of the character in the female eye.

Some male characters in the novels of Austen and Eliot are given more stress than others, who are usually placed opposite to the female protagonists. These chosen characters function in the novels in many ways: they are placed in relation to the female protagonists, they function as guides to the female



protagonists, they serve as authorial mouthpieces and convey the authorial judgements about social situation, and they represent the prospect of advancement and enlightenment through their thoughts and attitudes. However, male characters in Eliot's novels bear more significance than Austen's and perhaps share central position with the female characters if not with equal importance. For example, in *Middlemarch*, Lydgate's actions are presented side by side with Dorothea's and projected as two parallel characters to reflect on the nature of human lot, not about male or female lot. On the other hand, there are some minor male characters, who represent the social picture.

Therefore, male characters in the novels of Austen and Eliot are of two types, categorized not according to the regional characteristics and attitudes but according to their tracks of mind and way of reacting to certain social situations. From this light, there are the common men of society and the men with exceptional or advanced disposition.

### **(A) Men in Society**

Men's relation to social structure or men's performance in the social system – this has never been a dominant theme in the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot. The plots revolve round women's attitudes and women's fate in a social system. However, in this case, Eliot's *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner*, and *Daniel Deronda* may seem as exceptions, which in reality are not. *Adam Bede*, though titled in the name of the chief male character of the novel, the narrative and even actions of the character Adam Bede revolve round two main female characters, Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel. On the other hand, the first scene of *Daniel Deronda* highlights how Gwendolen Harleth has caught the attention of Daniel Deronda. The narrative centres on her, though some attempt is made to highlight

Daniel's reactions but not in depth. Coming to *Silas Marner* and *Daniel Deronda*, though too titled in the name of the main male characters of the novels, the narrative discourses do not concentrate on particular aspects of living life as men. Silas and Daniel simply expose individual's fight to retain individuality within the all-pervasive social influence. Both the characters leave their society at one point of their life as they cannot adjust there and look for a new settlement, which eventually happens in both cases. In this way, the situations, highlighted through Silas and Daniel, simply represent their existence as social beings, which do not include gender-specific aspects.

Therefore, in the novels of Austen and Eliot, the actions of the male characters reflect especially two aspects – firstly, performance of male characters as social beings and secondly, male characters' attitudes towards women. Both Austen and Eliot bring out the general tendencies of men in response to the social ordains. The general tendencies signify those issues of social life that are present in every society irrespective of time and place. Jane Austen's novels cover men's social activities within the domestic sphere and reflect on the prevailing social mannerisms that men bear within them. For example, Mr. Bingley remains "unaffectedly civil in his answer" (*PP* 90) in many occasions or Mr. Rushworth shows as much civility and manner he has, to present himself the most amiable in front of especially Miss Bertram and also others who are with her. The narrator describes,

Mr. Rushworth was eager to assure her ladyship of his acquiescence, and tried to make out something complimentary; but between his submission to her taste, and his having always intended the same himself, with the super-added objects of professing attention to the comfort of ladies in general, and of insinuating, that there was one only whom he was anxious to please, he grew puzzled. (*MP* 49)

Even in some cases, the author highlights some of the conversations of male characters that bring out their eagerness to follow social customs. Sir William Lucas is such a man, who tries to be social and is “fond of superior society” and so says to Mr. Darcy, “What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy! – There is nothing like dancing after all. – I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies” (*PP* 72). On the other hand, to be able to attend a grand party and the aristocrats, Mr. Collins “... looked as if he felt that life could furnish nothing greater” at the dinner party by Lady Catherine (*PP* 197). Thus focusing on the domestic life only of the English provincial town, Austen has projected the basic aspects of men’s performance in society through her skillful arrangement of plots and scenes. Except references to some external activities, nothing – narrative or scenes – is included in the narrative arrangements of the novels. Moreover, the author’s concentration is only on the aristocrats and the middle-class men while she rarely refers to the people of the lower status.

In contrast, Eliot’s attempt to cover almost all the significant phases of social life also demands depiction of men of various occupations, which she has done in her novels. She has exposed men in their different activities in the society – working men like Adam or Seth Bede, linen-weaver like Silas, banker like Bulstrode, scholar like Casaubon or Bardo de Bardi, politician like Harold Transome, estate owner like Sir James Chettam or ambitious doctor like Lydgate and so on. However, the activities of their professional life are simply referred to in one or two scenes but the main stress is on some common actions and reactions related to social matters. Therefore, in spite of the difference in range and settings, the intention behind male characterization in Austen and Eliot’s novels have been firstly, to show the effect of all-pervasive influence of social customs upon men



and secondly, to show their attitudes towards women that are again influenced by the social mind-set.

Comparatively, selected dialogues and actions of the male characters of Eliot's novels are more explicitly indicative of their thought about social conventions and women than Jane Austen's. Firstly, Eliot's novels show men generally dream for social recognition and do whatever becomes necessary for that. These novels reflect on the fact that most of the men dream to attain a well-reputed stature in society. The young Tom Tulliver, "quite likely to rise in the world!" (*The Mill* 504), or Arthur Brooke, who always try to please others – Eliot shows how men try to get a social standing. Eliot highlights the complexities related to this tendency of having social recognition. Firstly, the author shows how this desire stands opposite to morality – when the man becomes obsessed with his dream of climbing the social ladder, he can take any step in his life even at the cost of morality. Secondly, social recognition is related to wealth and richness, as a result of which man becomes greedy to attain more than enough money and unfortunately do something sinful. Nicholas Bulstrode gives false information to Will Ladislaw's grandmother, whom he marries, only to acquire her wealth.

Again, the men who already have the social status, take their rank and wealth as power. Eliot depicts "old Featherstone" who "was imaginative, after his fashion" (*Middlemarch* 266). The narrator describes, "He loved money, but he also loved to spend it in gratifying his peculiar tastes, and perhaps he loved it best of all as a means of making others feel his power more or less uncomfortably" (*Middlemarch* 265). Such men have nothing in their lives except their wealth that they think as their strongest point. Also, the prospect of money and financial status is more significant to men than the prospect of love. Even men like Willoughby in

*Sense and Sensibility* can easily sacrifice his love for financial gain and social standing.

Moreover, social standing has another form in public recognition, which happens through a standing in politics. Eliot shows how Tito Melema changes gradually after his connection with the political world increases. He seems to be determined to sacrifice anything, and already does many things selfishly in his life only for having a political standing. On the other hand, son of a political family, Harold Transome too does not understand any meaning in life except his win over politics. In this way, George Eliot has done various experiments in creating scenes of public life. Thus bringing public life in her novels, Eliot also renders the concept she strongly believes in – that every individual's private life is determined by his or her public life. Tim Dolin observes,

*Romola* also marks a significant transition in the kinds of novel Marian wrote... Also, for the first time, politics and public life entered her fiction. More particularly, in the character of Tito, she began to explore the relation of political life to the development of an individual nature... She would become increasingly preoccupied with this problem – that “there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life.” (33)

Besides Tito, Eliot shows this aspect of determinism in the life of Harold Transome, who is a son of a political family, whose private life is fully related to the public life.

Jane Austen has gone through this determinism concept indirectly and shows only from one side – from the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, the society she depicts is a place of peace and tranquility and people are busy with the private interactions more than public duties. The specific part of community Austen brings forth in her novels is well-settled and has enough money – in some cases, more than enough money – and most of the people do not actually engage themselves in any public service except charitable works. Yet, Jane Austen shows how the rank,

status and reputation of the family in the neighbourhood influence the private life. This influence of public life upon private life is something like a constraint – a certain way of living imposed upon men.

Moreover, a strong influence of social concepts is observed upon private life. George Eliot reflects on the fact that men are very much influenced by the social concepts; for example, the author hints on men's awareness about restricting women within a limit. In his childhood, Tom knows that "girls couldn't learn Latin" (*The Mill* 150), Mr. Brooke thinks that "young ladies don't understand political economy" (*Middlemarch* 13) or "young ladies are too flighty" (16) and according to Harold Transome "Women, very properly, don't change their views, but keep to the notions in which they have been brought up. It doesn't signify what they think - they are not called upon to judge or to act" (*Felix Holt* 20). This is undoubtedly the influence of social teaching. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the narrator detestably refers to men's tendency to disrespect women: "... the men at St.Ogg's were not at all brave by any means; some of them were even fond of scandal, and to an extent that might have given their conversation an effeminate character if it had not been distinguished by masculine jokes and by occasional shrug of the shoulders at the mutual hatred of women" (*The Mill* 518). However, this has also been the influence of the social mind-set and men in general continue to follow it.

Both Jane Austen and George Eliot reflect on the fact that usually men remain indifferent towards the rules and customs of society they have been following. The authors have not depicted these secondary male characters of their novels in details, so as to highlight the common tendencies of them only. The readers find these male characters less as particular characters and more as general inhabitants of society. As a result, the readers can identify their common sorrows and problems among these male characters.



Yet again, from the point of view of characterization, every novel of Austen and Eliot includes two male characters in contrast to each other, from whom the female protagonist has to choose. One of them represents the social mind and the other represents the spiritual and enlightened mind. Elizabeth Bennet chooses between Collins and Darcy, Emma chooses between Frank Churchill and Knightley, Fanny has Henry and Edmund in front of her, Dinah goes through Seth and Adam Bede, Dorothea comes across Casaubon and Will Ladislaw, Esther has to choose between Harold and Felix and Maggie's bewilderment is observed in choosing among Stephen and Philip. Interestingly, the authorial support is upon the men with enlightened and advanced thoughts – these male characters are portrayed in the novels with significance and skill from the female point of view.

### **(B) The Uncommon and the Advanced**

Jane Austen and George Eliot have portrayed some male characters in their novels as different – uncommon and advanced – from the average men of society. Two aspects are here – the uncommon and the advanced; the authors show that some people has only uncommon traits and some people are advanced in their thoughts and attitudes, which reflect their uncommonness. Such characterization appears to be less influenced by reality and more enforced by the authors' intention to reflect on the difference between truly advanced mind and pretentious, uncommon attitude and also driven by their hope to see the presence of advanced mind in the society.

To speak about uncommonness, the first name comes into mind from Austen and Eliot novel is of Edward Casaubon. This character is for sure different from the average men observed in the society. The narrator hints at the characters' reputation in society and says, "... noted in the country as a man of profound

learning, understood for many years to be engaged on a great work concerning religious history; also as a man of wealth enough to give luster to his piety ... His very name carried an impressiveness hardly to be measured without a precise chronology of scholarship" (*Middlemarch* 8). Casaubon has dedicated his life to a research titled "Key to all Mythologies". Thus, in a certain area of knowledge, he has a claim to be called advanced, which makes Dorothea assume that Casaubon believes in advanced concepts in all the aspects of life. However, Casaubon's way of thinking and behaving after marriage reveals that apart from his field of research, he thinks just like any other man of the society – especially the fact that he has married with the same common intention in mind. The narrator describes, "It had occurred to him that he must not any longer defer his intention of matrimony, and he had reflected that in taking a wife, a man of good position should expect and carefully choose a blooming young lady – the younger the better ... of a rank equal to his own, of religious principles, virtuous disposition and good understanding" (*Middlemarch* 230). However, Eliot does not blame Casaubon for this rather she sympathizes with him. A man who has all the yearnings and desires of a normal man but fails to fulfill them in time for he has been engaged to serious learning surely struggles in later life. The authorial voice states, "For my part, I am very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self – never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold..." (*Middlemarch* 232). Through this character, the author discourages any type of extremity, which eventually affects rhythm of life.

Furthermore, Eliot shows the uncommonness of the historical figure Savonarola. This figure has attained a reputation and honour of almost a prophet. The narrator describes, "Savonarola appeared to believe, and his hearers more or



less waveringly believed, that he had a mission like that of the Hebrew prophets” (*Romola* 120). His uncommon thoughts has been a great influence to others and this has “...made Savonarola stand out the more conspicuously as a grand exception” (*Romola* 120). This has been the historical fact while George Eliot points out that Savonarola preaches enlightening thoughts but he himself fails to follow them in his own life and thus cannot prove himself as an advanced and enlightened man. In this way, this character too appears to be uncommon but not advanced man. On the contrary, the character Dino has given his life for what he believes himself. Dino has always opposed what his father has guided him. He discusses it with his sister, Romola and says, “My father has lived amidst human sin and misery without believing in them: he has been like one busy picking shining stones in a mine, while there was a world dying of plague above him” (*Romola* 90). Bardo de Bardi is in stark contrast to his son, Dino in his thought and belief. Bardi “has sought no worldly honours; he has been truthful; he has denied himself all luxuries; he has lived like one of the ancient sages.” He has lived “according to the purest maxims of philosophy” (*Romola* 90). Thus on the one hand, Bardi preserves tradition and on the other hand, Dino follows the new thoughts based on the peace of the world and human beings, though both of them appear uncommon in their lifestyle.

Austen’s novels do not include male characters with uncommon traits like George Eliot’s. The first reason may be that the ages the two writers’ novels portray are characteristically different. Austen’s novels depict the lifestyle of an age and setting that is uneventful, dull and unchanged. While Eliot projects an age of change and diversity of conceptions – the society naturally is divided between men who support the traditional and men who believe in change and advancement. If not with such uncommon characteristics, some male characters of Austen’s



novels are enlightened and bear thoughts of advancement in mind. Basically, both Austen and Eliot significantly portray some male characters who, through their feelings and attitudes deliver the authorial message of advancement in thoughts and actions. The authorial stress is on the two basic parts of advanced mentality: one, recognition of women's opinions and women's freedom of expressing their wishes and feelings; two, ability to criticize the problems of existing social codes and welcome and accept change in the society.

Both Jane Austen and George Eliot have portrayed some male characters, in whose thoughts and attitudes there are reflections of enlightenment and advancement and who are generally sympathetic towards women. For example, Sir James Chettam welcomes Dorothea's comments about social, economical and political matters regarded as men's department by the society. Moreover, he enacts Dorothea's cottage plans on his own estate, Freshitt. These attitudes are reflections of Chettam's liberal mentality towards women. Similarly, the thoughts and comments of Dr. Kenn projected in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, reflects his ability to judge and criticize the real situation of the society and his support of women's equal rights. He is anxious of the fact that "the ideas of discipline and Christian fraternity ... hardly survive except in the partial, contradictory form they have taken in the narrow communities of schimatics..." (*The Mill* 507). Moreover, Dr. Kenn takes bold steps though in vain to restore Maggie's future from the disastrous situation she faces, when all the people of the society including her brother, Tom, disdain her.

Like Dr. Kenn, Edmund Bertram of Austen's *Mansfield Park* is sympathetic towards women. His difference from the common men in attitudes is highlighted in the narrative arrangement of the novels. He is the only person who has cared for Fanny from the time she has first entered Mansfield Park. He has

behaved like a cousin while others treat her as a poor relative. Edmund takes Fanny's side when Mrs. Norris forces her to join in the play and says, "Let her choose for herself as well as the rest of us. Her judgement may be quite as safely trusted. Do not urge her anymore" (*Mansfield* 132). However, Fanny still faces rebuke and Mrs. Norris declares her "very ungrateful" (*MP* 133). Also, in another occasion, Edmund protests when Fanny gets headache after she has been "walking as well as cutting roses; walking across the hot park" (*MP* 65).

Besides these compassionate male characters, the novels of Austen and Eliot present some enlightened and individualist male characters as guides to the female protagonists, who show the female protagonists the right path by pointing out their faults. Austen shows how Knightley stands alone in criticizing Emma's misdeeds. Even he gives advice to Emma, "Better be without sense, than misapply it as you do" (*Emma* 51). Knightley has no class-consciousness in the strict sense as he thinks of Martin as "a respectable, intelligent, gentleman-farmer" (*Emma* 50) and suitable for Harriet. In the same way, Henry guides Catherine and brings her back to reality from the world of imagination, while Daniel Deronda shows Gwendolen the right path. Thus these male characters transpose their vision to these female characters.

Also, these characters are placed as figures who can pacify the conflicting situation between women's rights and social domination. Also, these characters sometimes serve as the authors' mouthpieces and directly convey authorial messages. For example, Henry Tilney's advice to Catherine sounds authorial:

Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you – Does your education prepare us for such atrocities? Do your laws connive at them? Could they be perpetuated without being known, in a country like this,

where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing.... (NA 128)

In the same way, authorial message is sometimes delivered through the character Adam Bede. On one occasion for example, Adam says to Dinah about the significance and spirituality of love: "...how can there be anything contrary to what's right in our belonging to one another, and spending our lives together? Who put this great love into our hearts? Can anything be holier than that? For we can help one another in everything as is good" (*Adam Bede* 577).

In such a pattern, the male characters who work as the mouthpieces of the author serve as the indicator of the real situation. This has been part of the authors' method – on the one side the authors portray the female protagonists and verbalize their thoughts and on the other side, criticize the actions of these female characters through the male characters chosen as the authors' mouthpieces. For example, in *Emma*, when almost everyone around Emma, hides her faults, Mr. Knightley alone points out every wrong step of Emma. In case of *Darcy*, it is true that he himself has faults in attitude that he later overcomes, but he and his appearance have always helped the author as well as the reader to measure the extent of Elizabeth's wrong assessments and so her errors.

Also, the authors have criticized the social customs through some of the male characters. For example, Mr. Bennet's humour hints on the wrongs of society. He stands against the beliefs of Mrs. Bennet that represent social beliefs. He opposes the arrangement of Elizabeth's marriage with Collins for securing the house and financial gain.

Then again, Eliot depicts characters like Adam Bede, who has a strong mind and a firm belief in religion and who does not get baffled by the many divisions of religion. On one occasion, Adam says to Seth, "Let 'em follow their



consciences 'ud let 'em stay quiet i' the church – there's a deal to be learnt there. And there's such a thing as being over-speritl; we must have something beside Gospel i' this world" (*Adam Bede* 6). Adam comments on another occasion: "The more knowledge a man has, the better he'll do's work; and feeling's a sort o'knowledge" (*Adam Bede* 579).

As Adam has an enlightened mind, Eliot shows some characters who has a great dream and want to dedicate his life for that. Lydgate's new way of medical treatment has received mixed comments from the Middlemarchers. Some do not think it "quite sound" "upsetting the old treatment", while some "hail the advent of Mr. Lydgate" and some others "like treatments that has been tested a little" (*Middlemarch* 76). Still, Lydgate has the ability to bear all the criticism and advance in his mission but unfortunately, the want of money becomes one of the main obstacles in his work. His everyday struggle to get money, his wife's daily prompting to attempt to climb the social ladder – all these have come in front of him.

In Jane Austen's novels, there are no such male characters very much uncommon or advanced like George Eliot's. The first reason may be the ages of the two writers have been different. Austen's novels belong to such an age and represent such a setting that can be called monotonous in one word. The provincial life Austen depicts involves men who just live in the society, while Eliot projects an age of change and division of concepts – the society naturally includes some men who support the tradition and some or few men who wish for a change that would bring newness. Still, if not with such passion, some of Jane Austen's male characters are uncommon in their attitude and advanced in their outlooks.

Moreover, Jane Austen has placed some male characters in her novels who retains their individuality when others have totally submerged in the tide of social

rules. These male characters appear to be strong enough to think independently of what is right and what is wrong, even if their thoughts go against the others around them. Surely Mr. Bennet appears to have advanced thoughts and beliefs. He does not support what others do from a certain belief that is universally acknowledged in the society, but remains inactive and silent about them most of the time.

As a matter of fact, by characterizing some advanced minds in their novels, Austen and Eliot have indicated the tools of changing the society towards advancement. In their novels, the two authors have placed characters who have outwardly uncommon features but inwardly conventional thoughts on the one side, and those who are progressive and liberal on the other side to hint at the pretention and actuality respectively. The first type of characters can only create bewilderment and complexity for others while the second type of characters is the perfect leaders for social advancement, for which Jane Austen and George Eliot have sympathized with them.

## CHAPTER FOUR RELATIONSHIPS

The narrative arrangements of the novels of Austen and Eliot involve sequences of human interactions, which bring out some basic relationships between individuals living in a society. This interplay of relationships is the inevitable part of social life that characteristically appears to be a complicated part. The novels of Austen and Eliot represent network of relationships just as it is observed in reality. The observer, in this case, is a woman, who re-judges the complexities of relationships from the woman's side and points out the main faults or problems of women on the matter of interaction, sorts out the ways of strengthening mutual feelings, and also hints at the probable result of certain action. In this connection, the narrative hint is on the external factors that are influential in the growth, stagnation or failure of relationships. Also, the question that how much a woman can be blamed for any complexity in relationships frequently comes out in the narrative. Thus, the narrative insists on considering these human relationships from the female point of view as they are projected from the female consciousness. This involves the thoughts and feelings women go through in the different stages of relationships, which reflect on the causes of actions and reactions and the after effects of those actions.

Man-woman relationship is related to individual's social interaction. Naturally, the greater influence on the growth of such relationships is of the social rules and norms. Also, family life of the individual has a far-reaching influence upon the individual – the relationship with the family members plays a significant role in the individual life. In this way, Austen and Eliot show in their novels the interrelation between social life and family life. In every case, the two authors



depict human relationships combining intensity with precision, emotional involvement with objective judgement.

### **(A) Man-Woman Relationships**

Both Jane Austen and George Eliot have placed man-woman relationship at the centre of each of their novels. Though there are many other minor renditions of such relationships in the background, the focus is centrally upon one couple at the least – the narrative records the important phases from their first meeting till maturation.

In their handling of man-woman relationship, both Austen and Eliot have been more or less experimental. They have tried to bring out the many colours man-woman relationship has. Even they have highlighted in some of their novels the interrelated complexities between men and women. For example, in *Mansfield Park*, Fanny gradually falls in love with Edmund, who on the other hand, wishes to develop a relationship with Mary Crawford. In the middle part of the novel, the narrator describes the situations from this light, projecting the development of complexities between the three. However, the complexity related to man-woman relationships seems to be from the beginning in Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Dorothea opposes to everyone's expectation of her marrying Sir James Chettam and willingly accepts Casaubon's marriage proposal to everyone's surprise. Later on, the situations become more complicated as a result of firstly the maladjustment between Dorothea and Casaubon and secondly as a result of the growing relationship between Dorothea and Will Ladislaw. The complexity grows even more when Dorothea's situation is linked with Lydgate and Rosamond's life – even the narrator exposes a link between Will and Rosamond. Also there is a hint that both Dorothea and Rosamond fail to satisfy their husbands – Lydgate feels that

Rosamond does not have the compassionateness and enlightenment in thought and attitude like Dorothea, which are never appreciated by Casaubon. This has been the complexity in the two couples because both are mismatches. Dorothea has what Lydgate needs and craves for but not Rosamond; the narrator verbalizes the mind of Lydgate: "...is there not a genius for feeling nobly which also reigns over human spirits and their conclusions?" (484). Rosamond, on the other hand, excels in her training as an accomplished female who is expected to be a perfect wife of any socially amiable man. Thus, in both cases of Dorothea and Rosamond, the problem is the difference of expectation between the man and the woman in their conjugal life.

This difference in expectation and reality has been one of the noticeable situations George Eliot has reflected upon in some of her novels because according to her, "Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual" (*Middlemarch* 161). Dorothea marries Casaubon with the wish to educate and enlighten herself in the way she has always been prohibited by the social rules as a woman. However, after her marriage, she realizes that there is no possibility to see her dreams come true. The narrator focuses on the various stages of her married life: the time comes when Dorothea, to her surprise and awe observes the reverse reality. The narrator says, "And by a sad contradiction Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form" (165). The narrative sequences focus on the days of first surprise after marriage, when "For the first time since Dorothea had known him, Mr. Casaubon's face had a quick angry flush upon it" (167). Thus the hint is on the fact that such relationships that have never been based upon love have been an attempt to mutual adjustment and

understanding in vain, finally end in disappointment; though these are the relationships which have started with so much hope of happiness.

Such conflict between expectation and reality is the main problem in the relationship between Rosamond and Lydgate too, though in this case, the situation is narrated from Lydgate's point of view may be because the authorial support is always with the enlightened and advanced mind. However, the narrator sympathizes with Rosamond too on the ground that she cannot be blamed in any ways as she is trained to think in the social way from her early age. The reality is Lydgate and Rosamond represent totally different world of understanding: one is a social rebellion who wants to come out of the social barrier of tradition to present novelty in the society, and the other is the most obedient social being, who cannot think of anything beyond social customs and conceptions. The narrator says, "Poor Lydgate! Or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other know nothing" (*Middlemarch* 138). The narrative records the effect of this complication, while verbalizing Lydgate's mind: "Lydgate could say, 'Poor, poor darling!' but he secretly wondered over the terrible tenacity of this mild creature. There was gathering within him an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond." (*Middlemarch* 481) He has to find another way, and so, as the narrator observes,

... relieved from anxiety about her, relapsed into what she inwardly called his moodiness – a name which to her covered his thoughtful preoccupation with other subjects than herself, as well as that uneasy look of the brow and distaste for all ordinary things as if they were mixed with bitter herbs, which really made a sort of weather-glass to his vexation and foreboding. (*Middlemarch* 482)

The uneasiness in Lydgate shows the existing problems in such a relationship. The authorial implication is on the fact that an uncommon and enlightened mind, when fails to express his or her feelings to his or her life-partner,



he or she has no way other but hide them within. Through Dorothea, Eliot shows the same thing – inability to express innermost feelings – from the other side. While, Dorothea has tried to explore Casaubon's mind but in vain, their relationship eventually fails. However, in this case, Casaubon cannot be blamed either. He has his own ambition and has led his own life in a way that he may have lost the capacity to discern in to others' minds. Then, in plotting the widow Dorothea with Will, the author shows a great daring but the implication is again on the fact that the most important thing in a relationship is to communicate with each other's feelings. Also, the authorial stress is on the couple's self-satisfaction and happiness.

Thus, every such relationship depicted in the novels of Austen and Eliot, reflects upon the fundamental problems that cause the complexities. Firstly, the problem arises when the man and the woman cannot communicate and share their feelings with each other. Secondly, some external factors or some characteristic traits, which are again influenced by the external factors, create obstruction between man and the woman to express themselves freely. However, these two factors together or interchangeably create complexity in relationships. For example, taking the relationship of Dorothea and Casaubon into consideration, a woman with an inherent passion for knowledge expects the soulful support from her life-partner, who, in turn, expects a submissive wife as any other man of the society. Guided by the social mind-set, Casaubon simply fails to understand the share of thoughts Dorothea wants to have. Later on, Dorothea's gradual detachment from him is her reaction to such maladjustment. When, Dorothea gradually alienates him, Casaubon feels, "To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence now was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority..."

(*Middlemarch* 345). The stress is on the fact that till the end of Casaubon's life, Dorothea fails to communicate with him and him with her. In the same way, the breach between Romola and Tito is caused by the inability to share each other's feelings. Tito is guided by the dream of social reputation, for which he is ready to do anything right or wrong. On the other hand, ethics and morality are dearer to social recognition for the passionate and spiritual Romola. Thus, Romola fails to cope with Tito's social thoughts and their relationship eventually comes to an end. Here again, social mind-set serves as the external factor in breaking their relationships. The hint is also on the fact of reality that woman with an open mind fails to share their thoughts with their life-partner as the latter is influenced by the social conventions.

Jane Austen shows the intensity of such social influence through the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby. To overcome poverty, Willoughby sacrifices his love for her though deep in his heart, he has true feelings for Marianne. He even remembers the day he parts with her: "Her sorrow, her disappointment, her deep regret, when I told her, that I was obliged to leave Devonshire so immediately – I never shall forget it" (SS 317). Also, he knows that he has sacrificed his love and he is not going to have such comfort anywhere else; so he says, "Well, I went, left all that I loved, and went to those to whom, at best, I was only indifferent" (SS 317-318). This is how, the relationship between Marianne and Willoughby fails to progress towards marriage for the external factors like money and social security.

However in every novel of Austen, the central focus is on the growth of a relationship between a man and a woman that leads to their marriage. This is one of the factors different from Eliot's novels: while Eliot's novels deal with the after-effects of relationships, basically after marriage, to explore the causes behind them



Austen's novels project the elements that unite a man and a woman and the diversities related to it. Pre-marital stage in relationships is the point of focus in Austen's novels. Though situations are different, these novels have almost the same pattern – the man and the woman meet each other in different occasions – gradually come closer – after struggle and misunderstanding, the woman realizes her love – eventually they get married.

The selected sequential series of actions of Austen's novels record the growth of the feeling of love between a man and a woman that ultimately results in their marriage. These focused relationships seem to be less realistic and more the authorial exemplification of how relationships should be. In contrast to these, the other minor projections of relationships throughout the novels show the reality part and reflect on the hollowness, lack of love and prominence of sociability that the author is critical about. In most of the cases, the relationships are pre-arranged with the help of the elderly women after having the assurance of the man's financial stability and the woman's financial gain. Even the elderly women sometimes arrange couples in their imagination from mere assumptions. For example, Mrs. Norris finds "symptoms" (*MP* 107) of intimacy in Miss Julia and Henry Crawford, which Mrs. Grant approves by saying it "a very pretty match" (*MP* 107). However, these elderly women can make some of their assumed affairs a reality. Mrs. Bennet has enforced the relationship between Jane and Bingley from the beginning, as it can ensure Jane's financial gain and eventually the two get married. As for Miss Bertram, marriage with Mr. Rushworth, as she thinks, can "give her the enjoyment of a larger income than her father's, as well as ensure her house in town (*MP* 34)". Though the elderly women have a special part in arranging the relationships, the men and women themselves are interested to meet their so-called perfect mate. Lady Bertram manages to marry Sir Thomas Bertram and thus secures her



financial stability, though there have been no bond of love between them. In the same way, the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Collins does not have any depth but is only based on material and social adjustment. They cannot feel true love yet they imagine themselves to be in love as the narrator mockingly says that Mr. Rushworth, "...being inclined to marry, soon fancied himself in love" (*MP* 33) but the reality reflected throughout the novels is that marriages are arranged in terms of only financial condition.

Nevertheless, the authorial disappointment is firstly in the fact that relationships grow on the basis of social factors and mainly money and secondly, relationships are taken as a means of material adjustment. However, Austen is not against financial stability – the fate of every centrally focused relationship shows that the women gain financial security too by marrying the men they love. Elizabeth is married to the rich Darcy, Fanny becomes a member of Mansfield Park by marrying Edmund and even Ferrars also have a good settlement that secures Elinor's future. In any case, depiction of these relationships bears the authorial implication that firstly, relationships should build on the basis of love for each other and secondly, women delay to understand their own feeling of love and to identify the perfect person in their life. The narrative monitors every step of growth of the feeling of love and every stage of change in feeling and attitudes of the woman especially, though the narrative reports on the mental state of men too. The narrator brings out the fact that such relationship develops almost automatically of which the woman remains unaware for a long time. At the first stage, the woman is observed to be interested in the man's activities. For example, Fanny, deep in her heart, has an earnest interest on Edmund which she is not aware of. She observes him keenly and even questions his decisions as if she can read his feelings. The narrator translates Fanny's mind, "Could it be possible? Edmund so

inconsistent. Was he not deceiving himself? (*MP* 141). In such a thought there is a hidden concern for Edmund that is reflected.

Conversely, Elizabeth remains rude towards Darcy from the beginning and never shows any interest to him outwardly. Yet, as the narrator indicates in several occasions, Elizabeth observes Darcy from the very beginning, which hints on her attraction to him. On the other hand, Darcy appears to be attracted to Elizabeth almost from the beginning – he states about his attraction to Elizabeth’s eyes to Miss Bingley: “My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow” (*PP* 73). In the second stage, Darcy acknowledges his feeling of love for Elizabeth and so, leaving all his pride and arrogance, he comes to her. He can understand that in vain he has struggled and he cannot repress his feelings for her. So he says to Elizabeth straightaway: “You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you” (*PP* 221). But Elizabeth, still obsessed with the information she has received about Darcy, at once decides to reject his proposal. The narrator says,

“In spite of her deeply-rooted dislike, she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man’s affection, and though her intentions did not vary for an instant, she was at first sorry for the pain he was to receive; till, roused to resentment by his subsequent language, she lost all compassion in anger.” (*PP* 221)

In parallel to Elizabeth’s outward rejection, Austen projects Elizabeth’s inward state, which still has a concern for Darcy. In the beginning of Chapter Thirty Five, the narrator continues to verbalize the thought-process of Elizabeth. “Recollection of Mr. Darcy’s sometimes coming there” (*PP* 226) makes Elizabeth anxious as she walks in a part of the lane in Kent. Such a mental situation does not imply that Elizabeth wants to avoid Darcy but in reality, deep within her mind, there is a keen interest in her to meet him again. On the whole, Elizabeth suffers



from an inner conflict in such a situation – on one side, she considers the information that she gets – all of which are against Darcy and on the other side, her unwanted interest, and attraction to him. Then, as soon as she becomes clear of Darcy's nature from different situations and basically from Darcy's confessions in his letter to her and after his rescuing Lydia, Elizabeth feels comfortable.

Emma is for the most part, as her actions show, totally unaware of her own inner feelings, or she does not pay attention to it. However, she has always considered Knightley as a friend and discusses matters with him freely. The narrator hints at Emma's feelings for Knightley that is reflected in some of her speeches. For example, Emma directly says to Knightley, "Oh! No, upon my word I have not the smallest wish for your marrying Jane Fairfax or Jane anybody. You would not come in and sit with us in this comfortable way, if you were married" (*Emma* 225). Her reaction reflects on the matter that she cannot think of any woman engaged with Mr. Knightley. One of the reasons of this is that she likes the presence of Knightley and loves to be close to him. Conversely, Mr. Knightley's feeling for Emma has always been profound and when at length he expresses his heart to his beloved, he says, "If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more" (*Emma* 338). He also says, "I have blamed you, and lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it" (*Emma* 338). Knightley can understand the inherent feelings of Emma which she herself is not aware of. He says, "God knows, I have been a very indifferent lover. But you understand me. Yes, you see, you understand my feelings – and will return them if you can" (*Emma* 338).

One noticeable thing in Austen's portrayal of the growth of relationships between a man and a woman is that the problem is on the woman's side in identifying the love in life. Austen focuses on the growth of each relationship and



shows how women delay to realize the truth of a situation. Elizabeth's first knowledge about Darcy is based on some comments of others, Emma always wrongly takes her imagination to be reality, Anne Elliot gives importance to her father's assessment than her feelings, and thus all of them misunderstand the real situation and suffer. However, in the end of an Austen novel, after realizing the personal faults, the man and the woman change and unite through marriage. Thus the authorial suggestion remains that the most important thing is re-assessing one's own self, realizing the reality and identifying one's real love.

Moreover, these relationships also ascertain the fact that an ideal relationship establishes such an understanding among the man and the woman that each learns from the other, corrects themselves. Darcy and Elizabeth learn from each other and develop more, Emma realizes her errors through Mr. Knightley.

### **(B) Familial Relationships**

As part of depicting family life, the narrative arrangements of Austen and Eliot's novels rather insignificantly include situations that show interactions between family members except for those special representations that are highlighted and that are symbolically significant and reflect authorial vision.

Generally, the novels of Austen and Eliot represent familial relationships as part of the depiction of domestic sphere. As scenes of family life build the basic structure of the novels of Jane Austen, many of the sequences show the characters interacting with their family members, though these are projected as much as the storyline demands without much detail. Austen's novels have pictures of family life of provincial English town; the interactions of the Bertrams or the Bennets, Emma and her father, Mr. Woodhouse and so on are projected with utmost realism. Eliot's novels include scenes of family life of various settings with the same flavor

of reality. Scenes depicting intimate hours of the two sisters Dorothea and Celia, who live in the provincial English town called Middlemarch, or tragic hours of the family members of Thias Bede at his sudden death – in every scene of family life, Eliot brings out the family emotions. The narrative records the outburst of the wailing mother because of this sudden death. The mother cries out seeing her son Adam: "...thee'st got nobody now but thy old mother to torment thee and be a burden to thee: thy poor feyther 'ull ne'er anger thee no more; an' thy mother may's well go arter him – the sooner the better – for I'm no good to nobody now" (*Adam Bede* 119). In this way, several scenes of Austen and Eliot's novels portray the most trivial matters to most complex situations of family life that create the essence of family life in general.

However specifically, Austen and Eliot highlight some relationships in some of their novels that significantly symbolize a particular theme and thus represent authorial vision. Comparatively, the novels of George Eliot have more symbolic representations of familial relationships than Jane Austen's, which are based on the theme of spirituality. In *Silas Marner*, for example, Eliot has blended mythic elements with realism and has projected the spiritual side of the bond between father and daughter. The authorial voice comments,

In old days, there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's. (131)

Here is a contrast and a parallel between the mythical or historic world and the modern realistic world. Eliot signifies how the presence of a child can create heaven in the world of destruction. Interestingly, she projects this spiritual bond of a father and a daughter through Silas and Eppie, who have no biological



relationship between them. This is how, the author wants to stress on the connection of the soul that is most important in relationships. On the other hand, Godfrey, the biological father of Eppie, watches “with keener though more hidden interest than any other, the prosperous growth of Eppie under the weaver’s care” (133). Godfrey struggles as he is far from this angelic touch. This “other child” has been a part of his thoughts and mind and the narrator knows, “...he would not forget it; he would see that it was well provided for. That was a father’s duty” (133). This is the contrast between the two fatherly affections. On the one hand, the narrator shows how the presence of the child, rejuvenates Silas, changes his thoughts and personality. Eppie’s entrance in Silas’ dead life, is something like a fairy tale. But not a single part in it is unreal. The whole of it is realistic and true to life – only one needs to search for it and understand it. Attacked by the worldly evils, Silas has once wanted to be aloof and detached from any connection with family. But when Fate has sent an angel-like little girl to him – the process of his change starts to take place. “There was love between him and the child that blent them into one, and there was love between the child and the world ... Silas began now to think of Raveloe life entirely in relation to Eppie” (130). On the other side, the real father of Eppie wishes for the angelic touch of the daughter and more than that he wants to do a father’s duty – to provide for Eppie. However, Godfrey cannot break the strong bond between Silas and Eppie, which is heavenly.

Romola is similarly attached to her father Bardo de Bardi – Eliot portrays the spiritual bond between this blind scholar and his daughter in the novel *Romola* and best in Chapter Five: “The Blind Scholar and His Daughter” (26) of this novel. Till the end of Bardi’s life, Romola has been his constant companion – reading for him, learning and believing every word of knowledge she hears from him. Even the daughter shares the father’s sorrows of life; Romola feels them with her heart



and gets upset. The father feels her sorrow in return. On one occasion, the narrator describes, "There was a rising sob in Romola's voice as she said the last words, which touched the fatherly fibre in Bardo. He stretched his hand upward a little in search of her golden hair, and as she placed her head under his hand, he gently stroked it, leaning towards her as if his eyes discerned some glimmer there" (31). Even after Bardi's death, Romola nourishes her father's teachings and remembers her father's wishes. Similarly, Jane Austen shows a spiritual bond between Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, though they do not always react freely with each other. Elizabeth gets the moral support from her father in any situation, which, as Austen hints, has given Elizabeth the mental strength.

Another famous example of spiritual bond is of Maggie and Tom in *The Mill on the Floss* of George Eliot. In this case, Eliot experimentally projects the difference between their childhood days and the days of their youth to show how the spiritual bond between this brother and sister diminishes by the social influence. The author focuses on the childhood days of Tom and Maggie to show their intimacy and Maggie's dependence upon Tom. The sequences of the novels show that Maggie cannot bear the situation when Tom becomes angry with her. On one occasion, Maggie makes Tom angry by "upsetting Tom's wonderful pagoda" (84), and then "Tom's persistent coldness to her [Maggie] all through their walk spoiled the fresh-air and sunshine for her" (85). In this way, Eliot has projected the innocent and childish sentiments and misunderstandings of the childhood, which remains a notable portrayal of childhood days, and which appears to have autobiographical elements in it too. If Eliot had only portrayed this part of Tom and Maggie's life, it would have been merely a memorable picture of childhood. However, Eliot has continued through the days of their youth in the novel and focused on the change in the relationship between Tom and Maggie. Thus, the

projection of the two parts of their life becomes significant in reflecting the stark contrast. Eliot shows how the most intimate, innocent bond of the tender age suddenly reverses in youth. The narrator observes, "Life did change for Tom and Maggie, and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives" (38). It is true that after the Maggie-Stephen situation, Tom has been bewildered. The authorial voice intervenes before the reader can blame Tom because the latter is guided by the social concepts, which are more important to him than even his love for sister. The authorial voice comments, "He [Tom] judged by what he had been able to see, and the judgement was painful enough to himself" (512). This is how the social education imposed upon the intellect prominently controls the emotion. In this situation, when the heart says one thing and the head forces the other side, the person reacts in a strange way as Tom does. The authorial voice analyses, "There had arisen in Tom a repulsion towards Maggie that derived its very intensity from their early childish love in the time when they had clasped tiny fingers together and their later sense of nearness in a common duty and a common sorrow; the sight of her, as he told her, was hateful to him" (572). However, the authorial voice stresses on the fact that this is natural and one cannot blame this individual. "Tom, like everyone of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over him, leaving a slight deposit of polish; if you are inclined to be severe on his severity, remember that the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision" (512).

In this case, the difference of thoughts and attitude between Tom and Maggie is clear – Tom is practical in his attitudes, follows the social rules of conduct and dreams to be a notable figure in his society; Maggie on the other hand, is always guided by her emotion and she gives the utmost importance to her



passion. This is why, the bond between Maggie and Tom becomes impossible in their life, and they unite only after death.

Coming back to Maggie's familial life, Eliot shows the father-daughter relationship of Mr. Tulliver and Maggie in a more neutral, usual and realistic background. Here is an example of the conversation between Mr. Tulliver, the father and Maggie the daughter that the narrator presents:

“Why, Maggie, how's this, how's this?” he [the father] said as they rode along, while she laid her head against her father and sobbed. “How came you to be rambling about and lose yourself?” “Oh, father,” sobbed Maggie, “I ran away because I was unhappy - ...” “Pooh, pooh,” said Mr. Tulliver soothingly, “you mustn't think o'running away from father. What 'ud father do without his little wench?” “Oh no, I never will again, father – never.” (114)

No doubt there is a close affectionate relationship between the father and the daughter, but Maggie still struggles to have a spiritual connection with her father. From the childhood, Maggie has been dependent on her father's support, which she has got at times. The narrator reads Maggie's mind when she says, “Her [Maggie's] father had always defended and excused her, and her loving remembrance of his tenderness was a force within her that would enable her to do or bear anything for his sake” (207). Still, Maggie can feel a distance between her and her father, a barrier within them that gradually grows to be bigger than before.

Jane Austen's novels have many examples of this feeling of distance and lack of spiritual bond between family members. The focus is sometimes on some family members among whom there is no intimacy, affection or love for each other. The relationship between Thomas Bertram and his daughters, Maria and Julia represent this. Some formal conversations, formal pretentious expression, and artificial revelation of feelings have been the only way of connecting with each other that does not even happen regularly. What is more, the narrator reflects on



the fact that the girls appear to be delighted and are at ease when their father is not at home. One among several reasons behind this may be the strict, arrogant conducts and lifestyle that have made the individuals formal and strict and unable to express their true feelings. Yet, Emma is closer to her father, Mr. Woodhouse than the Bertram girls; “She [Emma] dearly loved her father”, but there have been no spiritual connection between them and “he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful” (*Emma* 6).

Yet, Jane Austen has also portrayed some brother-sister relationships who appears to have a very formal relationship between them. For example, there is no closeness in Edmund and her sisters Maria and Julia. The same is true in Henry and Mary Crawford. However, they sometimes comment on each other’s conduct. Mary says about Henry,

All that English abilities can do, has been tried already. I have three particular friends who have been all dying for him in their turn; and the pains which they, their mothers, (very clever women) as well as my dear aunt and myself, have taken to reason, coax or trick him into marrying, is inconceivable! He is the most horrible flirt that can be imagined. (*MP* 37-38)

Miss Bingley comments about her brother’s way of writing letters – “Charles writes in the most careless way imaginable. He leaves out half his words, and blots the rest.” (*PP* 93). However, in the novels of George Eliot other than *The Mill on the Floss*, there is no such intensity shown – one of the reasons may be that Eliot has worked on different themes in different novels. For example, in *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot shows Mrs. Tulliver with her sisters in their middle age. Eliot has focused on the conversations between these sisters to reflect on the invisible competition that goes on between them. Again, Eliot projects a simple, peaceful relationship between Adam and Seth Bede, while she highlights the enmity of the brothers, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass.

Many a times, Austen and Eliot have applied the contrast between practicality and passion, between commonness and uncommonness, in portraying siblings in their novels. For example, Jane and Elizabeth Bennet are such contrasting characters. Jane can silently obey and follow every social custom while Elizabeth, though she joins at every social occasion, gives importance to her feelings. Jane is submissive, social and all-enduring and Elizabeth is bold, outspoken and uncommon. Eliot puts the same type of contrast in Dorothea and Celia – the former being uncommon, passionate and ambitious and the latter being very much social. Even the people around them can clearly observe the difference between the two sisters. The narrator says, “the rural opinion about the new young ladies [Dorothea and Celia], even among the cottagers, was generally in favour of Celia, as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke’s [Dorothea’s] large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking” (*Middlemarch* 7). From the very beginning, Eliot shows the two sisters in a contrast: in the narrative, in the dialogues and in other people’s comments. The novel *Middlemarch* begins with the very affectionate scene where the two sisters are “in the pretty sitting-room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters” (8), soon agree to cherish the memory of their dear mother by looking at her jewel-box. In the meantime, the narrator starts the task of comparing the two sisters and says that Dorothea “was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense” (5). Here again, Eliot places Dorothea’s passionate and unusual nature with the common, stable and practical nature of Celia. On the other hand, the sisters Elinor and Marianne of Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* are almost the opposites. Elinor, the narrator describes, “...possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement”



(4) while Marianne “was sensible and clever, but eager in everything: her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation” (5).

In spite of their difference, these sisters mentioned above have a very dear and affectionate relation with each other. Austen and Eliot have highlighted their difference and their closeness at the same time. Celia cannot bear the scene of Dorothea wearing widow’s dress. “Celia in her white muslin and light curls” has been anxious about what “Dodo must feel in her black dress and close cap” (*Middlemarch* 450), and she requests Dodo to throw off her cap. The narrator says, “It was a pretty picture to see this little lady [Celia] in white muslin unfastening the widow’s cap from her more majestic sister...” (*Middlemarch* 450). On the other hand, Elizabeth hastily reaches Bingley’s house to see her sick sister, without caring for the social manners, for which she has been criticized by the Bingley sisters, though Bingley understands it as sisterly affection. Elinor, too feels for her sister very much and gives all her support to Marianne when the latter has been upset because of Willoughby.

Thus, in terms of the strength of spiritual bond, the familial relationships in the novels of Austen and Eliot are of two types: one, which is based on spiritual bond and profound love and affection and two, that has no spirituality and pretentious and artificial in characteristic. The authorial hint is that when the strongest influence upon individual mind is of social conceptions, relationships with family members become artificial and devoid of profound love and affection. As the society teaches the individual artificiality, formalness and so-called good manners, the individual loses the ability to express his or her feelings freely and spontaneously. The insistence in the scenes of Eliot’s novels is that those who can spiritually connect with their family members do not strictly follow the social way of life. For example, Silas has been totally aloof from society, Bardo de Bardi as a



scholar leads an uncommon life and Mr. Bennet never supports the social customs and conducts and so always approves of Elizabeth's conduct that is not according to social rules. In this way, the harshness and strictness of social system stands between familial relationships.

## CONCLUSION

In one sentence, the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot are mirrors of life in general. The regional characteristics, though form the settings of the novels, the fundamental aspects of human life in a social structure undermine all the regional elements of the novels. For the readers of any part of the world therefore, an Austen or Eliot novel is a renewed experience of living a social life.

To create such an experience, the two authors have experimented with reality: i.e. on the one side, they have presented the most common features of reality as they have come across in their lives and on the other side, maintaining the same atmosphere of reality, they have regulated parts of the storyline in a way that their novels reflect the authors' concerns, aspirations and messages. This is why, the stories are not so much important in the novels of Austen and Eliot in the sense that the authors' thoughts, conceptions, anxieties, assumptions and philosophies work as guiding forces in the development of the plots and narratives – the storylines remain dependent on or indicative of the authors' assumptions and philosophies. On the whole, the plots of these novels reflect the female point of view on the social situation both from the authorial perspective and the female character's perspective.

Methodologically, the strongest tool for implementing the female point of view in the novels of Austen and Eliot has been the all-pervasive authorial presence. Every structural part of the novels – narrative, characterization, plot construction, and closure – individually and collectively reflects the authorial minds.

Most importantly, the narratives of the novels include authorial comments both directly and indirectly. Direct authorial intervention does not frequently

happen in Austen's novels – the authorial comments are occasionally included in the narrative simply as statements. Conversely, authorial comments in Eliot's novels appear in separate paragraphs, which are analytical in style and deliver the authorial philosophy in an explanatory fashion. The authorial comments of both the novelists reflect on two levels of social situation: on the overall human condition and also specifically on women's condition. While reading, the readers become aware of a voice beyond the fictitious voices that speak in the novels. This voice, that represents the authorial mind, exists between the story and the readers and delivers the story from the female consciousness but not from female sentiment. In Austen's novels, the stories are always from the stand-point of a woman who is an inhabitant of the same domestic sphere she depicts. Eliot has used the two sides of female consciousness separately in delivering the stories of her novels: one is projecting the situation from the feelings of being a woman, and the other is representing the situation from the consciousness of a simply a human being – transcending the barrier of gender, which establishes the neutrality of the female point of view. In effect, both Austen and Eliot have been impartial throughout in portraying a situation, in dealing with a problem and even in projecting a woman's life in their novels. However, the authorial comments are reflected indirectly through the narrator's statements. The narrator presents a situation in a tone and in a way that guides the reader to consider aspects of the scenes in certain ways.

Also, the authorial influence is predominant in the matter of characterization in the novels of Austen and Eliot. The minor characters of their novels, both male and female, reproduce the general relation between the society and the individual and also between the society and women. The short appearances of these characters reflect some specific attitudes of men and women that the



authors concern most – the basic tendency being submissiveness towards social oppression and losing individuality. The major female characters are centrally placed in the novels and the situations revolve around them. They get the most authorial support and sometimes serve as focalizers. Through the major female characters, the two novelists experimentally put the message of advancement, self-recognition and enlightenment in the social structure. On the other hand, the major male characters are projected in relation to the female characters. These male characters serve as the authorial mouthpieces, and symbols of advancement. However, both female protagonists and major male characters implement the authorial conceptions in the traditional atmosphere of the society.

Again, the narrative arrangements of the novels of Austen and Eliot are serialization of themes in two parallel structures. The main storyline of every novel itself is dependent upon the thematic structure that imposes a girl's journey from struggle to ultimate realization. On the other hand, there is a parallel storyline that has no development but that is the common story of the average social beings. Both the thematic structures are intermingled within each other in the novels and sometimes seem to be difficult to identify them separately. Yet, this has been possible because the narrative arrangements – selection of scenes, narrative focus and serialization of scenes – first of all implement the thematic structure and the stress is on the authorial hints than the stories. For example, the stories of Dorothea and Lydgate are plotted as parallel to each other to draw attention to the helplessness of the individual in a strict social structure. Or else, the single story of Dorothea's life or the story of Lydgate could have been sufficient for the novel. Besides, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the inclusion of Charlotte Lucas's story in a way reflects the authorial stress on the assertiveness of Elizabeth in contrast to the submissiveness of Charlotte Lucas. In this way, the readers can sense a pervasive

authorial presence in all the parts of these novels. However, when the authors have focused on a situation, they have highlighted every related cause and effects of it. It is true that the centre of focus in all of their novels has been on the female protagonist. In this case too, the authors have rendered the characters with realism – illuminating the faults and errors of these characters along with their positive sides. Thus, the stories are presented from the female point of view but with unbiased mentality and judgements.

Thus, every part of the novels of Austen and Eliot is controlled by the authoritative power and reflects the authorial concerns about the problems, delicacies and complexities related to living life. An experience of a lifetime involves certain feelings of happiness and struggle, hope and dejection – the two authors have developed their novels from such realization, which has made their novels meticulous research on life. From the wider perspective, the two authors have projected in their novels, the social structure in the background to scrutinize the actions and interactions of individuals living under social restriction. The difference is that Austen has chosen the domestic sphere in a provincial setting as representative of the social structure while Eliot has always taken a whole community as a unit – sometimes a rural area and sometimes a town.

Though different in range, the novels of Austen and Eliot surprisingly reflect same authorial concerns. These common concerns of the two authors, from which the novels get their growth, are again related to the primary aspects of living a social life. To begin with, these authors are concerned about the problems individuals face living in a society. From a firm belief that the strongest influence upon an individual is of the society, Austen and Eliot have projected life from the social point of view. Mainly, they have focussed on the many facets of simple daily life and highlighted the various simple emotions of the individuals, from



which the authors have attempted to determine the social situation. The authors show how the social norms stand against individuality of the social beings. In most of their novels, Austen and Eliot have brought the social structure and the individuals separately into focus as two sides to show the peaceful conflict between these two parts. The existing social rules and their followers, established beliefs of the society and the believers collectively stand for society and against the individual who nurtures his dreams and wishes. Man or woman who retains individuality and has ideas ahead of his time faces the social obstacles most. Eliot creates the character Lydgate and Dorothea to project this fact. Also, Eliot shows how Maggie struggles as she follows her own emotions and passions deliberately. However, Austen does not present the problem on that wide scale; she has focussed on the obstructions the individual faces in simply expressing things in his or her own ways even from the family members. Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* has been rebuked especially by her mother for her bold decisions. The two authors in this way hints at the fact that there is no place for heart-felt feelings and expressions in the social life; one has to absorb the social mind and act accordingly.

Majority of the social beings is used to such rules of conduct and has put the social mind in place of their own – the authors are concerned also because of this. For such submissiveness towards society, values form according to the social philosophy. In this connection, the two authors highlight the predominance of wealth and money in society. There remains a competitive mood among the individuals of the society, as the authors hint, and a tendency to acquire money and wealth to climb the social ladder. As a result, the wealthy takes their riches as power and the others yield to the rich. The authors concern about such a situation since real virtues are no longer taken into consideration as valuable, rather a



person's reputation is measured in the yardstick of wealth and property. Jane Austen has worked on this in details, while Eliot simply shows how interaction in social life is influenced by the aspects related to money. The social situation becomes even more complex as artificiality and pretension invade the society and heart-felt wishes and spirituality are pressed underneath. The authors, specifically Eliot, highlight that religion simply remains as an institution, a practice of rituals with the least spiritual feeling.

Besides, a special attention of Jane Austen and George Eliot is upon women's existence and aspects related to women's existence in the social structure. Each of the novels of Austen and Eliot centres on a female character, who is the protagonist, around whom the whole story evolves. Also, other secondary female characters populate the backdrop of the novels and visualize women's usual situation in a society. The authors are concerned about women's way of life in society and figure out the problems from both sides: from the social side as well as from the women's side. The two authors concern about the too much restriction that society imposes upon women; no access to the public world, no scope for formal or higher education, no allowance for making decisions in the community level, which means on the whole, the concept of freedom is alien to women of the society the authors depict.

Too much constriction of society upon women, as Austen and Eliot signify, has been the problem from the social side, while the authors have dealt with the problems developed from women's side at the same time. The two authors point out the fact that usually women take the social ordains for granted though it is against their right of freedom. Young women are attentive to such customs of society and act accordingly. There is always a hint in the novels of Austen and Eliot that women – especially young women act as they are expected to

suppressing their own wishes. Sometimes, it seems that these women have forgotten or never felt the need to express their inherent feelings. The elderly women not only absorb the social situation but also motivate the young women to follow the same path. Austen and Eliot's concern about this submissive and yielding attitude or tendency of women have strongly influenced the plots of their novels perhaps more than many other things.

Overpowering control and influence of social concepts, as the two authors show, have also affected the core of basic human relationships. The authors are concerned about the fact that the many facets of human relationships have taken certain unaccountable shapes to be justifiable in the eyes of society. Jane Austen specifically puts emphasis on the fact that men and women, absorbing the social codes of conduct, have forgotten or cannot feel the true meaning of relationship. These social beings, as the author shows, are caught within the format of good manners and strict rules and know only some pretentious and artificial expressions. For such social people, man-woman relationship means a scope for better life in the sense that it includes material gain and financial stability. However, both Austen and Eliot signify the inevitability of the feeling of love in the formation of any relationship in two ways: firstly through showing how lack of love and warmth in relationships create problems and secondly, through showing how the feeling of love binds individuals with eternal bliss. Though there are people in society, as the authors show, who remain indifferent to their situation and never feel any problem. The novel *Mansfield Park* reflects on the fact that there is no attachment or love between Lady Bertram and Thomas Bertram. However, the wealth and property of Mr. Bertram ensures financial stability for Lady Bertram and so she remains satisfied as she has been from the very beginning of her married life though her life remains in nothingness. On the other hand, Lydgate and Rosamond are unhappy in

their conjugal life because Rosamond does not have the satisfaction that wealth and property can give to her. Thus, the authors show that the matters related to material gain and satisfaction gets more importance than the feeling of love and understanding. To add with this, Austen and Eliot's novel reflect the fact that the predominance of social civility, manners, and codes of conduct has weakened the mutual responsiveness, openness and sensitivity among blood relationships. Both the authors portray such relationships along with those, which are based on love and spirituality. The latter type of projection reflects less the reality and more the authorial dreams.

In this way, the same stories of the novels of Austen and Eliot that reflect authorial concerns also visualize authorial dreams and beliefs at the same time. In a Jane Austen or George Eliot novel, the readers can notice the reflection of the authorial aspirations, dreams and beliefs in those parts – scenes, acts of characters or narratives – that are projected with more stress than the other parts. The parts of their novels that are realistically portrayed but do not directly represent reality are basically the reflections of the authorial dreams. For example, Dorothea aspires to achieve profound knowledge and to attain higher ideals and thus asserts her individuality – Eliot has created this character with everything she wants to see in a woman, and placed her among the realistic background of the novel to project the actions and reactions of both Dorothea and her strict, conventional society. Then again, Austen's dream character is Elizabeth, who, having faults of her own, has the ability to rise above her errors, change herself, and retain individuality even in the strict and conventional social structure. Not only Dorothea or Elizabeth, the two authors have created a number of female characters and also some male characters to transpose their dreams and conceptions in their novels.



The readers of Austen and Eliot's novel can sense that strong authorial support is on the freedom of individual choice and on any attempt to retain individuality. For example, Lydgate's ambition to work for advancement of medical science and Dorothea's dream of achieving profound knowledge have been matters of focus in Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Not only for great causes but also for any attitude that proves strength of character gets authorial support in the novels of these two authors. For example, Adam Bede leads a simple life but he has strength of mind and has confidence on his judgements and feelings. Jane Austen highlights such individuality rather than projecting any daring act of an individual as a proof. The female protagonists of Austen's novels make errors, but their acts to maintain their individuality is always a matter of focus in the novels. Moreover, these female characters, who have shown their boldness in thoughts and action, have the ability to realize faults and change themselves. The whole process – the boldness to think and act on one's own, making errors, realizing the faults and finally changing oneself through correction – has been possible because, as the author hints, these female protagonists know their own wishes and can feel their own needs. This is why, minor act like Fanny's denial to take part in the play is highlighted in the novel. Even Emma's attitudes are never scornfully presented though she has faults in her character; one of the most noticeable is the over-confidence in her decisions and judgements. Eliot, in the same way, sympathizes with some characters like Maggie, Lydgate, Esther, who prefer their own choice to those imposed upon them and act according to their feelings.

Through these enlightened characters they have created, Austen and Eliot have also shown how love should dominate over wealth and property. Esther's choosing Felix Holt is one of the examples from Eliot's novels that celebrate pure love, which is not dependent on financial stability. On the other hand, Elizabeth's

marriage with Darcy or Fanny's with Edmund highlights love too, though in both cases financial stability is present, which again reflects on the authorial conception that the matter of love should have predominance, which however, is not against having wealth and property. Almost every novel of Austen and Eliot ends with the victory of love. In Austen's novels, this victory is accompanied with the hope of happiness and peace. The Bennet sisters, Jane, Elizabeth and Lydia, and the Dashwood sisters are married and finally settled in their lives, Emma finds her own love in life, Fanny becomes a Bertram, Catherine and Anne too finds peace and happiness in their lives. If every step of the story of an Austen novel is considered, one can find the justification for a happy-ending. The protagonist's struggle to retain individuality on the one hand, and realizing her error of judgement on the other hand makes her a pure character, who follows the social rules and customs with her own intelligence and not blindly. This is first of all, the reflection of Austen's optimism. She maintains a positive outlook while dealing with the social situation though she is always critical about the existing systems. Her suggestion is to find the middle way for a peaceful life.

As Eliot's novels have different settings and themes, the endings are in the same way different from each other: sometimes it is happiness, sometimes tragic and sometimes only satisfactory conclusion. However, the endings of her novels too celebrate the victory of love but in different manners. Eliot depends on reality for the end result of the situations she has plotted in her novels. Esther, having the liberty to choose between Harold and Felix, chooses the latter and "Esther has never repented" (*Felix Holt* 257). Maggie's situation has been so much critical that reality does not grant any scope for her happiness in life and so Eliot unites Maggie with Tom in their death. In this way, Eliot concludes each novel according to her prediction of the possible result. However, the endings of Eliot's novels reflect the

inconsistency in authorial temperament. The author of *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss* seems to be a pessimist, who does not see any chance of personal satisfaction in the face of strict and conventional social system. The author of *Romola*, *Silas Marner* and *Adam Bede* shows the power of love, to be more specific, the stress is on the spiritual love.

Apparently so different, the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot were written from and with the same spirit. Born after two years of Austen's death, Eliot seems to have continued in her novels what Austen has left in hers: firstly, the reflections of fundamental aspects of living a social life and secondly, the authorial conceptions and suggestions related to it. This fine blend of realistic treatments of fundamental human feelings and authorial implications creates a novel that includes universality, authorial empowerment and realism at the same time. Thus, Jane Austen and George Eliot have been able to establish the female points of view in the true sense.



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