

B.A. Second Year

Jane Austen as a novelist

Jane Austen is one of the greatest novelists of the 19th century. She occupies a high place among female novelists of England. Her contribution to the English novel is noteworthy. She was a very careful artist who imparted realism to her novels. She pioneered the comedy of manners and she introduced dramatic element. She wrote her novels from the feminine point of view. It is also a notable contribution that she feminised the English novel.

Narrow Range: - Austen is called a 'pure novelist'. She presents an authentic criticism of rural society within the limits of art. The range of her novels is limited. She drew all her material from the society around her. She presents her own experiences and her own world. She never steps out of it. All her scenes belong to South England. She is familiar with her characters. They are true to life. Her acquaintances include country families, clergymen and naval officers. Their chief interest was matrimony. She chooses themes within the range of her experience. There is scarcely any feeling for external nature. There is little passion and the language of emotion is unknown to her.

Comedy, Humour, Satire: - Austen's novels are domestic comedies of a high order. She confines herself to the middle classes of society. Her comedy is confined to human beings in their personal relations. Her novels can be categorised as novels of manners also. It is because they deal with the manners, customs and follies of her limited social circle. We get an immense use of irony and humour in all her novels. Her attitude towards life is that of a gentle humorist. She has a keen sense of the absurdities of human beings. But she is never harsh or unkind. Her gentle strokes of irony are charming. Austen is seldom satirical. Her satire is always gentle. It is not severe and savage.

THEME: Love & Marriage: The main theme of Austen's novel is love and marriage. In her novels a young woman falls in love with a rich and desirable man. She has to face a lot of difficulties in the way of her marriage. But everything ends very well. Austen is against illicit love. Love must terminate in

matrimony. According to her mutual harmony is essential for a successful marriage. She realises that husband and wife should be spiritual counter parts of each other. A perfect marriage is fundamentally a perfect friendship. Marriage without this is no marriage at all. 'Pride and Prejudice' deals with the same theme.

Characterisation: - Austen's art of characterisation is praiseworthy. Her characters are minutely portrayed and well described. She creates living characters. They are the mixture of virtues and vices like real human beings. They are not types but individuals. Her male characters have some softness of temper, but her female characters are the most perfect. That's why in her novel we find feminine atmosphere. Austen has created many memorable characters like Darcy, Elizabeth, Emma and John Thrope etc.

Plot Construction: - Austen's great skill lies in her plot construction. Her novels have an exactness of structure and symmetry of form. Her plots are simple but pervasive. All her stories are faultlessly constructed. They move in a way of natural growth. Every character and every incident is necessary for the development of plot. In 'Pride and Prejudice' plot is the chief interest.

Style: - Jane Austen is a supreme realist. Her style is natural and careful. She has mastery over dialogue. She uses proper words in proper places. She never misuses words. The structure and movement is neat and brisk.

Conclusion: - Thus Jane Austen is one of the greatest novelists of England. She is always remembered for her faithful observation, personal detachment and fine sense of ironic Comedy. Her range is limited but her touch is firm and true.

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