CHAPTER 4
ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

The entire fictional work of James can be viewed as an organic statement on the complex nature of human characters. Henry James employs the term ‘characterization’ with an artistic insistence that invites its application as an important metaphor for the whole emergent vision of human life. Although the idea of characterization is not intentionally placed in his fictions yet James continuously places before the reader various situations and actions in the texture of which character portrayal runs like embroidery. Henry James’ art of characterization is such that it reveals even the minutest element of human nature within the structure of society and at the same time responds to changes, growth and transformation of the character itself.

There is an impressive range of women characters in James’s fiction. James dragged our attention to the world of wealth and leisure and displayed his female characters there to find their own identity. Most of his male characters also seem to be concentrating on women too. The structural features of Hawthorne’s stories influenced James where the American girls laid the religious innocence turning away from guilt and evil and at the same time entangling her in romantic passion. James was less interested than Hawthorne in the conditions
of sin, crime and personal obsession. Most of his male characters also seem to be concentrating on women too. The women in James’ fiction seem only on the verge of recognizing their sexuality or determining a strong role for themselves. Certain of his female characters came from small town backgrounds, flaunting wealth and seeking rank, others display ignorance of the things done to maintain a classless openness and willingness to be natural. It is also evident that after the abolition of slavery and the end of the civil war, the fairer treatment of women became the most contentious reformist issue in American politics. James saw the potential of this change in social attitude for comedy and pathos in his fiction.

“Daisy Miller” was James’ first real success, bringing him more celebrity than any other of the work. Not only, in his own words, did it make a great list in England, it did according to W. D. Howells: “......... divided America, where James’ female readership resented while it adored his portrait of American women.”

Daisy in “Daisy Miller” innocently ignores social conventions, observed in the New York society as well as Europe. She comes from Schenectady, upstate; and Mrs. Miller, quite unfearful of social disapproval in allowing her daughter to enjoy gentlemen’s company.
Daisy simply wishes to exercise her right to choose what male companions she pleases, without prejudice and suspicion. She does not want to know what people may be saying about her, or she would not like what they meant. She treats Giovanelli fondly, but without commitment. She does not want to use love as a means to gain. She is shown to carry the virtues as well as the defects of the new world abroad. There we find that Daisy is a young American girl experiencing the delights and the hidden dangers of Europe for the first time. She is an uncultured little provincial flirt with a rich father back home in Schenectady and a circle of gentleman admirers. We are informed early in the story by her little brother that her real name is 'Annie P. Miller'. The name 'Daisy' is not her real name but it seems to revoke her real nature. She has a bright, sweet, superficial little visage. She is described as very common and completely uncultivated. At the end of the story there was a sudden and terrible death of the heroine and James made the readers see the raw protuberance of her grave among the April daisies. This daisy imagery is connected with the tearing idea of Daisy’s innocence, which so preoccupies Winterbourne, the dilettante intellectual through whose eyes we see the events of the story. By the standards of Winterbourne’s circle, Daisy is vulgar and the fact that she is also richer than they are, make various matters even worse. Daisy has
spotted a genuine ethical difference between Europe and America when she says of flirtation and at this level it means both her ignorance of social code and her sexual intactness. If one thinks of Daisy as personifying the flower, she is named after; we see her innocence in a new light.

James was now poised to build a world reputation and with Washington Square, in 1880, he began to use that. For the first time he achieved simultaneous publication on both sides of The Atlantic. Recognized at once as a work of genius, Washington Square revealed an intensity that was new for James. It is not only the powerful study of a woman’s plight but also a sustained performance of wit is concentrated and unfussy American prose. The contrast between the novelists’ one and the emptiness of his characters’ lives is especially marked in ‘Washington Square’. There are three essential characters, the young heiress Catherine Sloper, father and her handsome and plausible suitor, though all the way through the fiction a fourth character, Catherine’s foolish widowed aunt Mrs. Penniman, tries to steal a slice of the action which is no business of hers and which she fails to understand. The plot of the fiction is quite simple. Catherine is the only child of her father, a rich and successful doctor. She is courted by a young and a charming young man whom Dr. Sloper at once assumes as a fortune hunter largely on the grounds that
Catherine is so stupid and unattractive that her suitor must have an ultimate motive. A reader gradually realize that Dr. Sloper’s conclusion is correct; Morris Townsend is indeed a fortune-hunter. The girl, torn between erotic and filial love, tries to win her father over and demonstrate her lover’s good faith by a gentle, patient capacity to wait. In the end the father takes his daughter to Europe for a six-month tour, which in fact he extends to a year, and at the end of this lengthy separation Catherine, returning to America aware that she will never gain her father’s consent and ready at last to marry her lover without it, is cruelly jilted by Townsend in a way that appears to confirm completely her father’s reading of the whole affair. Mrs. Penniman is a comedy figure and her trivializing presence contributes to the curiously detached tone of the narrative. She is not alone in distorting Catherine’s story to suit the requirements of her own imagination. Dr. Sloper in his attempt to extract some kind of damaging admission from Townsend’s sister gives his own special pleading account to Catherine. Throughout the novel Dr. Sloper holds obstinately to the theory of his daughter’s feeblemindedness, even as he vainly attempts to break her will. Catherine suffers, but she is not an easy victim, defended as she is by an inner strength that she never fully recognizes in herself.
Catherine, though she respects her father’s wisdom and is always pleased when he addresses her, unfortunately never knows what to do with his words of irony. Seeing them as valuable in some way, delicate and contributing to the sum of human wisdom, she yet fails to follow their exact senses. As an outburst to this situation, Sloper’s impatience, exasperation and amusement at his daughter’s blunders are not totally unnatural but unpaternal. D. W. Jefferson rightly comments:

“The doctor cannot satisfy himself in one way he will do so in another, so that her resistance provokes him to atrocity.”

Sloper’s incongruous raising of his hat to Catherine horrifies her at the very moment she realizes she has been deserted by Townsend, whose mask had suddenly fallen from his face. These insensitive acts are possibly clumsy gestures on the doctor’s part, or attempts to lighten the atmosphere and avoid direct triumph. At any rate Catherine never forgives or forgets but at the same time, in any case Catherine is of the unquestioning sort, cut out to be an old-fashioned wife regarding the reasons of favour for the so-called counterpart. Her fixation upon handsome ‘Morris’, which prevents her from marrying anyone else, is romantic, as is her reliance on will power. James traces her development from the plain, imperceptive, deeply feeling girl to the
conservative old maids with immense skill, contriving to pressure our sympathy for her as we are dismayed by her limitations. The goodness of Catherine initially appears passive and unwilled, develops into an enduring capacity for love and faithfulness and later when that love has been rewarded by a double betrayal, into a capacity simply to endure. Dr. Sloper triumphed, the vanish of Morris Townsend from Catherine’s life and forced Catherine to admit that she has been jilted. All through the long years of Catherine’s uneventful spinsterhood, this defeat has rankled and because of it Sloper’s obsession with Townsend has never left him. As a result Sloper asks Catherine to promise him that even if he is no more, she will not marry Morris, to which Catherine’s reply was an instant ‘no’. Catherine has no way explaining that her refusal is not due to any lingering concern with Morris Townsend but is a defense of the human dignity that her father had injured when she was young and is insulting now. He, failing to understand this, believes that her defiance is proof of her continuing interest in Townsend, and when he dies a year later she finds that he has taken a posthumous revenge on her. He has changed his will and the bulk of money, that money for the sake of which Townsend had courted and jilted her. Catherine neither needs nor wants the money, but again her father has managed to add new insult to old injury. Catherine’s plight is thus exemplary and is displayed to us with
different shades of emotions. The fiction still has one more twist. Once again, though her father’s premises were faulty his conclusion was correct; after his death Morris Townsend comes back into Catherine’s life. To say no to her father was a moral victory for Catherine; to say no to Morris Townsend is to banish a ghost of the past. Looking at this person who is nothing, looking into through him, she recognizes the pattern of his life: he had made himself comfortable and he had never been caught. With the authority that this recognition confers on her, she dismisses him from her house. The fiction ends, in a refinement of authorial cruelty by Catherine as she intentionally rejects Townsend, for whom she longed throughout her youth.

After ‘Washington Square’ fairly added a successful stair to Henry James’ career, he informed his readers, through New York Tribune that his next production is –

“A serious work – which shall represent him at his best.”

Thus he came up with ‘The Portrait of a Lady’ and the book version sold approximately 14,000 copies. James thus reached the first peak of his career. It is actually the story of Isabel Archer. Isabel is impulsive and spontaneous, and a little naïve. According to the narrator she agreed that people were right when they treated her as if
she was rather superior. France Noel and Dorothy Krook finds her "charming" and adds:

"Isabel is also spontaneous, direct and open." 4

Here as James see Minny Temple in Isable Archer and gives a discerning estimate of her failings and limitations which could serve as a note of caution to Isabel Archer –

"Her character may almost literally said to have been without practical application to life. She seems a sort of experiment of nature.....a mere subject without object. She was at any rate the helpless victim and a toy of her own intelligence..........She was a case of pure generosity...............for – in as much as she could hardly have suffered at the hands of others nearly as keenly as she did at her own." 5

In Isabel Archer the image of Milly has been cast as a complete mould of art. She is introduced full of curiosity and buoyancy of life which emerges from her sensibility and imagination fed upon fantasies and ideals. She has a thirst for adventure with life and her quest of knowledge in her own way. Her delicate desultory flame like spirit reminds us of Minny’s thought’. She loves places where sad things have happened. Being in love with romantic fantasy and melancholy,
she is not afraid of ghosts, but she is certainly afraid of sufferings. Henry James touches her weak point when he comments-

"But she was often reminded that there were... a great many places which were not gardens at all – only dusky pestiferous tracts, planted thick with ugliness and misery.... What in a scheme of the agreeable for one's self? It must be confessed that this question never held her long. She was too young, too impatient to live, too unacquainted with pain."  

Her highly charged imagination is gripped by a romantic and melodramatic fantasy of

"a swift carriage, of a dark night, rattling with four horses over roads that one can't see, and that is the idea of happiness."

James surrounds Isabel, who is highly intelligent, attractive, good natured and sensitive with a small system of representative figures. The first part of the novel is devoted to Isabel's preliminary skirmishes with life: her journey to England and Italy with her aunt, Mrs. Touchett and her encounters with lovers and friends. There is little action in travel, only the occasional visit to an art-gallery or an ecological site and many conversations, with Isabel either as
participant or subject. In the second part of the novel the dialogues are much tenser, featuring Isabel's husband, Osmond and Madam Merle as well as Pansy, their daughter, who suffers under Osmond's oppression alongside Isabel. Isabel very well knows that nothing that belongs to her, in any measure, was hers; on the contrary, it's a limit, a barrier. Isabel's commitment to pure identity is too theoretical to cope with loving people. She holds back from partnership and family life. She rejects suitors eminent in the worlds of the English establishment and American business, since both of them offer too narrow a sphere for her as a wife. Ralph Touchett, observing her judging life for herself, conceives the idea of putting "mind in her sails" by making his father leave great fortune for her. The money also failed to alter Isabel's temperament, but it puts it in her power to bolster the aesthetic life lead by Osmond. Isabel finds herself as a self-sufficient American girl; she prefers to think of the future than on the past and of all her liberties, enjoys most the liberty to forget. She believes she can do fine things with her fortune that may carve her future. Accepting Ralph's advice not to question her conscience so much, she attempts boldly to combine generosity with pleasure. James shows her to be too trustful, too unrealistic, too headstrong in rejecting Osmond. In Isabel Archer he associates the American traits of moral optimism and love of individual freedom with the face of evil.
In an intelligent, attractive woman, the combination leads to marriage with a wrong person.

Isabel has a quality of fastidiousness which interferes with her efforts to look deeply at life. For instance, when she pays attention to the children, mainly of the poorer sort, in Kensington gardens, it is told that her feeling of freedom throbs into joyous excitement. She asked them their names and gave them six pence and kissed the pretty kids. The readers are also told that Isabel, with all her love for knowledge, had a natural shrinking for raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge still existed in her mind with a tender love of ignorance. Isabel's virtuous motives transfer freedom of action from herself to her exploiters. James' handling of his heroine's perilous career is subtle and poignant. Isabel is drawn to Osmond by an appreciation of his artistic taste and an emotion which involves a subdued sexual response to his cool, still, insinuating manner. The greatness of "The Portrait of a Lady" rests on James' rendering of Isabel's suffering after her marriage. When one approaches Isabel's desire to fly to a life at a high level of intellectual generalization has ended with her tied to a man who constantly presents to the world a pose of mystification and impertinence. As one enters into the inner horror of Isabel's existence, the extent of her misjudgment of Osmond is powerfully revealed. Osmond is felt now to have the evil eye and
making everything wither. He hates his wife, Isabel for her open, kindly way of looking at life. His egoistic love of authority truly grinds Isabel's emotions. Osmond demands obedience in every small thing and gives Isabel a list of her duties and at the same time accuses her of accepting a letter from Warburton. It is the combination of meanness with exquisite formality that makes Osmond so odious. He always looks consummately uncompromised ignoring Isabel's presence yet recognizing her as a disagreeable necessity of thought. Their disagreement heightens the tension dramatically, exemplifying that quiet, hellish scene which Isabel, fatalistically foresees will last to the end. Isabel is determined to be responsible and escape the consequences of her deliberate act. It is partly due to her sense of decency in maintaining what was promised in her marriage vows. Isabel believes that one must accept one's deeds. James' imagery in carrying the agony of Isabel's married life is too powerful for anyone to suppose she can overcome her disappointment. Isabel attains the fullest recognition of her failure on the railway journey to England, undertaken against Osmond's wish, to see the dying Ralph. Isabel is out of her cage now but at this point the novel loops back on itself. On her arrival at Gardencourt, Isabel remembered the day when she sat like Cinderella in her grandmother's house of Albany and her Aunt Lydia had come, a disastrous fairy godmother, to change the course of
her destiny. She had wondered then whether in that other life she would have married Caspar Goodwood. She gets surprised by Caspar Goodwood, who came with all his love for her still burning alive, to confront her with the truth about her misery and to offer her that life she have had.

The whole world seems to open out all round her, to take the form of a mighty sea, where she floated in fathomless waters. The terror that feels is to surrender herself to a force she has never felt before, the elemental power of male sexuality. When Goodwood kisses her, she experiences the only real contact with physical passion of her life and it decides her fate. James expresses Goodwood's physical arousal and Isabel's helpless submission to it as:

"His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed, and it was extraordinarily as if, while she took it, she felt each thing in his hard manhood that had least pleased her, each aggressive act of his face, his figure, his presence, justified of its intense identity and made one with his act of possession."

As soon as he releases her, she runs from him through the darkness like a terrified animal where she knows that at this point she had to follow a very straight path. A path that leads back to the cage,
for she had taken the oath to obey Osmond, her husband, while getting tied to the sacred knots of marriage.

Isabel is surrounded by conflicting influences, but she insists upon living her life. She has her inherent contradictions and strikes as Ralph calls her-

"the most charming polygons" ⁹

She seeks knowledge and happiness to the exclusion of unpleasant reality of both, and yet she breaks down repeatedly with premonitions of her unhappiness. It comes in an extraordinary way by turning away from life, its dangers and sufferings. James says-

"Suffering, with Isabel, was an active condition, it was not a chill, a stupor, despair, it was a passion of speculation, of response to every pressure." ¹⁰

‘What Maisie Knew’ is again a Jamesian novel about education where Maisie the main character of the novel received education in an unconventional business. She had two governesses who were transparent to the adult readers. As for the glittering educational opportunities which her parents and guardians are always dangling before her the school in Brighton, the classes with awfully smart children, the music lessons - these invariably turn out to be too expensive. When it comes to the education provided not by books but by life, Maisie, as she herself reflects towards the end of novel that she
had governess for nothing but learn, learn and learn. By this time she
learns that the natural way for a child to have her parents was
separate and successive, like her bath and her nap for now she learns
to carry messages from papa to mamma and the reply from mamma
to papa. Maisie also doesn’t know much about money, her modest
idea of an expensive treat is one involving buns and ginger beer but
these great truths are brought home to her at various stages of her
career by dinner times without either mutton or pudding, by her
growing legs and shrinking skirts. She thus at times felt bored by not
having the things she needed. If this had been all that Maisie learn,
the story could simply be the story of a deprived child. But the story of
‘What Maisie Knew’ is not only a story of a deprived child but a story of
deprived child with a moral thought. Maisie is a fully responsive moral
being. Maisie do not have the passion for sex and money and it is
Maisie’s ignorance of these two great adult motives which enables her
to see so clearly the emotions they generate – love, jealousy, hatred
and fear. Amidst all the situations Maisie manages to extract from her
two governesses the nutrients that she needs for her moral survival.
It is only when Sir Claude comes into her life that she herself
consciously feels what love actually is. She falls in love with him in the
first sight as she says:
“No, nothing else that was most beautiful ever belonging to her could kindle that particular joy – not Mrs. Beale at that very moment, not papa when he was gay, nor mamma when she was dressed, nor Lisette when she was new.”

But the love that she feels for Sir Claude represents more a father figure. Her relation to Sir Claude is at the end of the novel. It represents an extra-ordinary variation of the daughter-father story that is one of James’ great interests. Sir Claude confesses to Maisie that he is afraid of her mother and they have an important conversation about fear, in which Maisie conflicts that of the many kinds of fear she thinks she has got them all. Sir Claude says he is not afraid of Maisie, because she is gentle and also because she is so young. Maisie felt Claude is afraid of himself because he felt men might become arrested as children in the grip of women. Maisie foresees a future in which she will be a grown woman capable of inspiring hear. But it is through such foreseeing that she discovers the power to choose, whether or not she will assume such power or renounce it. Maisie had as extraordinary capacity to identify with every male and female position in the formation aroused her. She begins deliberately to bewilder this distinction by playing with figures that challenge or elude gender distinctions, figures of touch and being
touched. This is where the relation between Maisie and Sir Claude is so beautiful and promising. But Maisie discovers the adult secret of sex when Sir Claude finds his relationship with Mrs. Beale and Maisie had to go with Mr. Wix and she didn't even find Sir Claude beside her to wave her good bye.

In "What Maisie Knew" he created the brilliant impression of how things happen to look through the fresh eyes of a completely unsighted observer. Now in "The Ambassadors" James does something bolder and more shocking by adding so many details to his character. The fiction begins as a deceptively understated comedy. We feel a mild but sympathetic curiosity about this modestly attractive American tourist as he eases himself into the experience of Europe, a curiosity that quickens as he outlines to intelligent Marie Gostrey, in the appropriate setting of an evening at the theatre, the odd mission he has come on. It is a classically simple tale with only three main characters, the admirable widowed mother, the ungrateful son and the anonymous but too imaginable wicked women in Paris, and only the real motive, money - money to very large amounts. Before this tale is unfolded and the characters are displayed, Strether enjoys his mildly romantic pre-theatre dinner with Maria Gostrey a dinner face-to-face over a small table on which the lighted candles had rose colored shades. Strether reflects on the odd fact that this is the first time he
has ever dined alone with a lady at a public place before going to the
play and apparently idly, asks himself why. The answer comes with the
weary readiness of things long taken for granted:

"He had married in the far away years, so young as
to have missed the time matural in Boston for
taking girls to the Museum; and it was absolutely
true of him that—even after the close of the period of
that—even after the close of the period of conscious
detachment occupying the centre of his life, the grey
middle desert of the two deaths, that of his wife and
that, ten years later, of his boy—he had never taken
anyone anywhere."^{12}

The most important thing that Strether knows about himself is
that 'the grey middle desert' of the two deaths had been the salient
feature of the emotional geography of his life. The death of his wife
had exacted a terrible penalty for daring to love someone and the
subsequent death of his son, with its disabling legacy of guilt mixed
with regret, exacted a still more terrible penalty for daring to grieve
for that loss. When residing in Paris he has entered a world of
appearance, bewildering, sensuous and infinitely appealing after the
hard, plain moral certainties. To the reader there certainties appear
even plainer and considerably less moral than that they do to poor
Strether. Strether is highly receptive to the differences of language and he hovers with complicated pleasures and pains on the brink at which words might mean one of two things. Strether is indeed surprised at the way people behave. He is too eager to assume that the responses, on the whole, are possessors of a superior civilization and that they all know what life is all about. Strether is also able to make fun of him up to a certain extent. Strether is mostly presented as an impulsive, rather helpless man. He does not know himself very well, which makes his self-confident expressions, few though they are, look rather out of place. He is a poor ambassador to handle an assignment of the kind he has. Strether at times seems to be worried about his inability to understand and his ignorance of what is going on. He is too uncritical and too adulterous to be a very intelligent man. He is actually a provincial in big city. He is in awe of people who may know the city and partially at least the local culture and manners better than he does but who otherwise have done nothing to deserve any admiration or respect. Strether’s problem is not only not knowing enough but not knowing that the people he admires so much may not be informed than he is himself. Strether also lacks confidence as one finds that Strether, despite his good reading-knowledge of French feels too conscious to speak it. This disability and fear of really taking the language to his mouth and possessing it symbolizes his timidity. But
James utilizes these weaknesses of Lambert Strether and makes them the greatest strength for the success of “The Ambassador”.

In James’s another master piece, “The Wings of the Dove”, he concentrates our attention at the beginning of “The Wings of the Dove” on the striking figure of a smart girl dressed in black whose good looks are one of the main sources of desire in “The Wings of the Dove”. She is no one but Kate Croy, who, through out the novel wears the attire of the heroine of the novel and is somehow always in the line of the eye or in the line of fire, a target not merely for appreciation but also for appropriation where she counted singularly for its pleasure. But marking things and people according to the demand of the market seems to be prime activity in the novel and the character behaves according to the demand. As a result, Merton Densher is given an important opportunity to appreciate Kate’s good looks when he returns from America to a dinner party at Lancaster Gate and witness her making an entrance. He sees the high estimate placed on Kate by her aunt Maudy, who casts herself as the girls’ general manager. A valuable figure like Kate finds her every moment violently scrutinized. Thus James introduces another character in the fiction Merton Densher who is the penniless young man. The character is first presented as a longish, leanish, fairish young Englishman wandering aimlessly in Kensington Gardens on a winter afternoon. Densher is attractive as
well as illusive; enough to cause passers-by to speculate about him, and the reader gets intrigued and wants to discover what he is really like. He is not really wandering aimlessly when one encounters him in Kensington Gardens, but awaiting a rendezvous with Kate. Kate is a sharp, clever, beautiful and determined girl. For Kate, poverty has the taste of dishonor and defeat, and Merton Densher is poor; worse, it is quite evident that he will never be anything else. Here James shows us Moud Lowder's character, through Densher's eyes, in terms of the contents of her house in Lancaster Gate:

"He had never dreamed of anything so fringed and scalloped, so buttoned and corded, drawn everywhere so tight and curled everywhere so thick. He had never dreamed of so much gilt and glass, so much satin and plush, so much rosewood and marble and malachite. But it was above all the solid forms, the wasted finish, the misguided cost, the general attestation of morality and money, a good conscious and a big balance, these things finally represented for him a portentous negation of his own world of thought..."  

Mrs. Moud Lowder is presented as a character who behaves vulgar, florid, powerful and extremely wealthy, plans to write her dead
husband’s money with a title by marrying Kate to an impoverished aristocrat, Lord Mark. In this plan she acknowledges her sense of Kate’s quality, Kate is her investment and as she tells Densher:

“**I want to see her high, high up, high up and in the light.**” 14

Here one see that Kate and Mrs. Lowder are well-matched opponents. Kate is neither florid nor vulgar but at the same there is a strong family likeness between aunt and niece. Kate is but strongly drawn to Mrs. Lowder’s world of money and at the same time towards Densher’s world of thought. But Kate here wants to taste the fruit of Densher’s tree while still contriving to have aunt Moud’s cake. She persuades Densher that they should conceal their engagement for a while for aunt Moud may get squared. Densher, though unable to see how the squaring can possibly affect, gives in the way more willingly because his newspaper has just asked him to spend the next few months in America. This was the right time for James to introduce Milly Theale. Milly Theale, is first seen from a distance and when we draw closer to her it is through the eyes of her companion, Mrs. Stringham, that we focus on her. According to Mrs. Stringham, Milly is:

“The slim, constantly pale, delicately haggard, anomalously, agreeably, angular young person, of
not more than two-and-twenty summers, inspite of her marks, whose hair was somehow exceptionally red even for the real thing, which it innocently confessed to being, and whose clothes were remarkably black even for robes of mourning, which was the meaning they expressed. It was New York mourning, it was New York hair, it was New York history, confused as yet, but multitudinous, of the loss of parents, brother, sisters, almost every human appendage, all on a scale and with a swap that had required the greater stage; it was a New York legend of affecting, of romantic isolation, and beyond everything, it was by most accounts, in respect to the mass of money so piled on the girl's back, a set of New York possibilities. She was alone, she was stricken, she was rich, and in particular was strange..." 15

This initial presentation of Milly to the reader through Mrs. Stringham's consciousness makes it impossible for us to judge whether Milly is really someone rich and strange or simply an ordinary and rather neurotic young woman. But whatever be the case Milly is extremely beautiful. She is humble, kind and guileless. But in the
later part of the novel, Milly is subjected to willed and human betrayal. Just as, in real life, when one tries to imagine the thoughts and sensations of the dying, one comes painfully up against the limits of our own imagination, so one relates the experience inside the novel as one sees Densher’s imagination fail to encompass Milly’s sufferings. Milly is tested to destruction and the readers are left not knowing the outcome of the test. To Mrs. Stringham she is a princess, to Lord Mark she is a Bronzino, to Kate she is a dove, to herself she is an ordinary girl or at worsts an ordinary heroine. To the reader she remains a mystery, a white space that may be full of unimaginable marvels. And finally she dies a lonely death.

In Milly Theale, the Minny Temple image is completely fused and integrated. It is sharply edged and chiseled, attaining both the fine intensity and amplitude of spirit. The stress, even in the midst of decay and liquidatation, is invariably upon the heroic and touching nature if the struggle and the desperate bid to hold on to life in its idealized frame work. Finally by affirming the American character of Milly, Henry James has completed the organic process of Minny temples image, by making

"a plant of pure American growth, sprout into the last fine flower- blooming alone, for the fullest
attribution of her freedom of an old New York stem."  

Milly Theale struggles on more than one front with missioned concentration of spirit. Her life is attended to higher and finer values. Milly Theale enjoys unqualified freedom but is conditioned at the same time by inner restraints, tensions and compulsions:

"I can do exactly what I like......I sate about till I'm black and blue. That perhaps isn't all joy; but lots of people, I know, would like to try it."  

Milly Theale’s torment emerge out of the core of her being an American girl in the midst of a hostile, sordid and masked society. The conflict between the American heroine and English society is no longer on the surface and on the level of manners as with Isabel Archer. Here it is carried into the arena of clashing social and moral values. It cuts a fissure into life itself; it reveals a sharp cleavage dividing humanity into disparate and hostile camps. It is a perennial clash of two traditions, culture and patterns of life- the other by Croy and Mrs Lowder.

The awareness of the fatal dichotomy between the American girl and the English society grows upon Milly Theale, suggesting the image of a strange and dreadful monster that calculated to devour the unwary to abuse the proud, to scandalize the good and where Milly
represents the unity and firmness of her national character, that, in a woman who was young breathed a virtual non-conductor.

Thus the American girl, during her process of transmutation into the steady realm of thought, not only assimilated and fused within her sharply defined ethnic traits of moral and social values, but also, in her peak moments of life attained the universality of archetypal feminine experience.

Like "The Wings of the Dove"; "The Golden Bowl" also represents a world that is plunged deeper and lifted higher into fantasy. It is actually powered by the raw energies of money and sex, which promise to sublimate themselves into a lived dream of material serenity. It is mainly Adam Verver's wealth that inspires this dream of serenity. Adam himself seems to have attained a state of divinity and all the other principle characters labor to keep him there. The dream is in fact founded on the combination of Adam's marriage with the forms of traditional English upper-class life, the London and country habitations, the dinners, receptions and house parties, the servants, and carriages and nurses hovering in the background. Here Adam represents only an approximation of perfect inertia. In the mildest way he expresses the sense of anxiety induced by living a life exempt from all the pressures of everyday material cases, as he says:
"What is come to, I dare say, is that there's something haunting – as if it were a bit uncanny – in such a consciousness of our general comfort and privilege..." 18

Adam’s wealth represents the power to appropriate both the portable and habitable, the living and inanimate. Apart from having tremendous wealth, Adam represents a new state of mind or one can say a tendency of social consciousness. He is one of James’ most historically typical figures and "The Golden Bowl" is in many ways his most prophetic novel. Adam is a new kind of pioneer or frontiersman in the van of a whole historical movement, that is, the mass hunger for culture. Also the truth of Adam’s particular case may be suggested by something the readers are told that:

"... he was, as a taster of life, economically constructed. He put into his one little glass everything he raised to his lips..." 19

James not only focuses our attention towards a character like Adam but also concentrates the novel among the relationships shared by four main characters. "The Golden Bowl" is basically about one marriage that of "Maggie Verver" to Prince Amerigo and one affair, that of Charlotte Stant, Maggie’s friend, with the same prince. The complication among the characters came during the marriage of
Charlotte to Maggie’s millionaire father, Adam Verver that is treated externally. In this novel, the usual Jamesian theme of American innocence and European experience undergoes a change. Here Maggie Verver begins to acquire the wisdom. The Italian character, Amerigo, is a genuine study in aristocratic attitudes, whose reactions become increasingly obscure. Charlotte, though born in Florence, is of American origin whereas the Ververs seem recognizably American in many respects as James keeps suggesting. They exhibit the extraordinary American good faith, which amazes the Prince. Both seem to be easily deceived. Mild and bland in manner, virtuously neat and smooth, yet quaint and modest, father and daughter achieve an amiability which falls short of charm. With the advantage of prodigious wealth, the Ververs exercise a steady power with a kind of cleverness, not doubting it ultimate irresistibility. Maggie, turns the table on her opponent with an ambiguous mixture of righteousness, pity and cruelty. Sallie sears expressively puts it:

“Though tempered always by Maggie’s sense that she is primarily moved by moral considerations, and that she is not to blame if certain fringe benefits accuse to her in the process: such as having her husband helpless in a new alliance with her, such as
the anguished humiliation and solitude of her enemy." 20

Maggie’s concentration on success is typically American. There is their desire to surround themselves with beautiful collections to supply the aesthetic quality which they cannot themselves radiate. There is their moral conformism, which coincides with the promotion of their own interest, justifying this well-meaning arrangement of the concerns of other people. The unhappiness among the characters starts by the entrance of Prince Amerigo because from here starts the Prince’s need of Adam Verver’s wealth. The prince wishes to marry Verver heiress, so that the rich people could come on to his side. The Prince is also well aware that Charlotta’s presence can have only one meaning, her continuing love for him. It was Charlotte’s and Amerigo’s doom to arrange appearances by not revealing to Maggie, the nature of their previous relationships. This failure on Amerigo’s part is compounded by her suggestion that Charlotte should marry some good, kind, clever, rich American, when Charlotte puts the point that she could never love one, that there is no question of her adoring one, the Prince replies:

“It’s always a question of doing the best for one’s self one can – without injury to others.” 21
It is this apparently enlightened moral philosophy that he tries to apply without realizing how easily Injuries to others take root and proliferate. The concealment of the relationship is already an injury to Maggie and the choice of Adam for the ‘good, kind, clever, rich American’ a worse one, especially since Maggie blindly encourages it. But Charlotte’s determination is fuelled by love, the only reciprocated passion which vindicates it for her, and gives “The Golden Bowl” its psychological balance. Charlotte is, in fact, to marry Adam Verver to get what she wants, freedom in her relationship with Prince Amerigo and satisfies her passion for Amerigo.

When one comes to the second part of the novel, one finds that the novel is now narrated by Adam Verver’s point of view, and deals with events two years of his daughter’s marriage. Thus James approaches to the characters’ decision and conversation after a certain time-gap. Here it is a time gap of two years when Maggie is shown with his baby son Principino and Adam feels delighted about it. After these two years Maggie realized the gap in her father’s life and finally her father Adam marries Charlotte. Again two year later James shows the full flourishing of Charlotte’s affair with Amerigo, now her son-in-law by marriage. Maggie and Adam accepted that Charlotte and Amerigo are more suited to the social circle than themselves. Under the protection of her marriage with Adam, Charlotte attains her brief
spell of happiness, when Charlotte arrives at Portland place, soaked in a waterproof,

"Invested with the odd eloquence – the positive picturesqueness, yes, given all the rest of the matter – of a dull dress and black bowdlerished hat, her ironic indifference to her appearance has, for the Prince, the effect of making the past meet the future, interlocking with tit, before his watching eyes, as is a long embrace of arms and lips." 22

James thus suggests the sensual element in their relationships. The lovers decide they must act in concert and trust each other, a vow sealed by a passionate kiss. But in this commitment of Amerigo and Charlotte, there prevails an element of danger. At the end of the novel Maggie’s inward voice about this hidden relationship is chastening cautious, worried and dogged. Suddenly a sign of power, the conviction of rightness, emerges in Maggie’s assertion. She begins to study her husband experimentally by departing from her customary behaviors accompanied with an infinite sense of intention. She finally forces the moves and does what she feels has to be done, the separation of the Prince from Charlotte, at an inheritable cost to her alliance with her father and she finally translates her idea into action. Maggie is thus conscious of Charlotte’s suffering, whereas previously
she had not been allowed to suffer herself, nor could she have suffered to the extent that Charlotte now does. Maggie thus has pity for the victim of her necessary unkindness. She feels for Charlotte in her invisible misery, which has to be borne behind a façade of social grace and wit. Maggie succeeds in her plan and the elements helped her in the success in the financial affluence and Maggie’s devotion towards Amerigo and the price for all this is love, that is, these things made him refuse Charlotte. Charlotte’s defeat comes when Adam agrees to remove himself and her to the hideous American city beyond the Mississippi, where his art treasures are to be a benefaction to the municipality. The characters part in pairs with a commitment for each other. The Golden Bowl is a remarkable case of the long exposition of a narrow subject, the private relation of a handful of characters almost royally detached from the rest of the humanity.

James’ another fiction ‘The Bostonians’ has at its hollow centre a girl whose fate is to be a screen onto which the fantasies of others can be projected. Verena Tarrant is that American girl whose role in the fiction is to compensate for the frustrations and failures of her admirers by embodying their dreams. Verena the mesmerist’s daughter has been brought up in that tawdry fringe of society where religion and politics, fraud and show-business meet. Verena is at one and the same time a vampire’s victim daughter and a nice ordinary
girl; consequently she perceives her upbringing as a normal and enlightened one. Such innocence seems almost more alarming than the complicity it mimics as Verena trustingly obeys her mother’s advice to ingratiate herself with the wealthy Miss Chancellor. Verena’s own image at the start of the fiction is a girlishly simple one—

"She enjoyed putting on her new hat, with its redundancy of feather and twenty cents appears to her a very large sum"23

If she doesn’t, after all, react too much, it is only because she can’t afford to. ‘You are so simple—so much like a child’, Olive says to her the first time they are alone together, and then, eagerly, impetuously, initiating the real subject matter of the novel, ‘will you be my friend, my friend of friend, beyond everyone, everything, forever and forever? Thus this line puts a delicate point very crudely that ‘The Bostonians’ is a fiction about lesbianism, about women’s rights. To put it in another way, it is a detailed and cruel analysis of the intensity and frustration of a one-sided passion. As the novel goes on, Olive’s anguish culminates in almost all the images of Verena. Olive, walking, in as agony of jealousy and loss, on the beach at Marimon while Verena sails somewhere in the bay alone in a small boat with Basil Ransom is suddenly visited by a nightmare vision, when she sees the small boat drowned and Verena dead. The jealousy at the loss of Basil
Ransom to Verena is here collated with Olive's own wish that Verena should sink for ever beneath the horizon, so that their tremendous trouble might never be. However beneath the superficial symbolism of concealed jealous, hatred and desire to give up the struggle lies the real meaning of the image, which Olive, with striking emotional intelligence, decodes for her that never to see the beloved's face again into the image of Verena's faceless corpse. Thus Olives tragedy is expressed. Everything that is charged and ambiguous about 'The Bostonians' from the special bitterness of the rivalry between Olive and Ronsom is like skating on thin ice as it is colored by the fact that it is set in the aftermath of the civil war. Olive and Ransom are both survivors and victims of the war - she has lost her brothers, he his patrimony. Now, in the easy return to the decencies of civilized life, they fight the war over again and Verena, untouched, radiant, submissive is the virgin American for which they struggle. Both imagine that they are fighting to liberate her, no one cares that in this conflict, Verena too is getting torn off in two halves. Ransom, when he waits in the Music hall to kidnap Verena, feels-

"as he could imagine a young man to feel who, waiting in a public place, has made up his mind, for reasons of his own, to discharge a pistol at the king or the president." 24
This reference to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln reminds us that more is at stake here than the rescue of Verena from a morbid old maid by a virile young man. Ransom not only desperately wanted to marry her but to silence her and he achieves the same at the end of the fiction. Verena is thus left to survive without her father, Olive, the Harvard college boys and the vast audience in the Music Hall. James thus gives a clue to his readers as to what awaits her in her new life as an ordinary, ungifted person in the tears that she weeps, beneath her hood, as the fiction comes to a close. Thus in 'The Bostonians' the story resolves round three major characters Olive, Basil and Verena where Basil wins and Olive and Verena loose the show. Generally one finds that a story ends when happiness begins but most of Jamesian story end at the realization of the wrong done by the characters throughout the fiction and so is the case with Verena in the Bostonians.

Thus one finds that not only there is an impressive range of women characters in James but there is also a beautiful range of relationships shared by the characters. In most of his novels James had created incidents and situation where his characters behave in a unique way with a matured mind of James, which gives a new twist to the story. At times it is very difficult to draw out the ins and outs of a single character from the complete fiction because most of the
Jamesian characters respond to the situation created by James in relation to various other characters of the story. That is why in this chapter characters are studied by presenting a complete incident and their reaction towards the same.
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