WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

SUMMARY

CHAPTER I: POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Late Eighteenth Century English Society; affluence and leisure; class distinctions; urban and rural life; journeys; village life.

I. Social life of the Age; family life; large families; women's job in polite society; social intercourse; card-playing; fashions in dress; women and balls.

II. Manners and morals of the time; Conduct Books; women and manners; woman and conversation.

III. Girls' education in the eighteenth century; Dr. Gregory, Mrs. Chapone and Lady Sarah Pennington's views; Moral Books on woman's status and duties.

IV. Woman and marriage; mercenary views; parents and personal discretion.

V. Marriage and its sanctity; duties of wife; woman's subordination; feminine virtues; women philosophers who challenged these.

CHAPTER II: THE FEMININE POINT OF VIEW BEFORE JANE AUSTEN

Influence of Restoration Stage on status of women; condition of female writers.

I. Lack of womanly touch in novels; Fanny Burney's entry.
II. Women novelists; family and social criticism; Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney and their mentors; the world they portrayed.

III. The pattern of their novels; real portraits, feminine delicacy; characterization of women; historical significance; ground work for Jane Austen.

CHAPTER III: JANE AUSTEN IN A WOMAN'S WORLD

I. Her love of feminine accomplishments; her interest in dress, balls; her later tastes; her enduring love of the countryside and walks; her health and nature.

II. Tragic incidents in her family; lack of outside appreciation; her steady and cheerful outlook.

III. Jane Austen's liking for good manners, good-sense; decent behaviour; her language; sense of propriety.

IV. Cleanliness and aesthetic decoration of houses; Jane Austen's attitude.

V. Typical country-woman; family—her chief concern; her congenial family atmosphere; love for the members of her family; interest in their little particulars; her strong perception and firm grasp of reality.

VI. Many men and women mentioned in her letters; stress on young women; a few children; child-heroines; healthy and balanced attitude towards life and its problems.
VII. Jane Austen's tastes and reading; her reading and responses.

VIII. Jane Austen's views on love and marriage; her realistic and balanced outlook.

CHAPTER IV: RATIONAL AND AMIABLE CREATURES (HEROINES)
Concentration on women in novels.

I. Introduction of major female characters; two girls in a novel; heroines in relation to the same or similar situations; small yet significant strokes; a miniature painting on ivory (two inches wide); reflection in heroines.

II. Study of her earlier heroines.

III. Study of her later heroines.

IV. Her different techniques of study; the maturity of her developing art of characterization.

CHAPTER V: RATIONAL AND AMIABLE CREATURES (CONCLUDED)

Heroinces and single-mindedness; decorum and decency; consciousness of virtues; self-confidence; heroines and parents.

I. Physical beauty and heroines; good at conversation; character-study in conversation; complete reserve and candour in women; earnestness about serious things; perception and steadiness in young women.
II. Autobiographical element; brother-sister relationship; faith in personal observations; self-assurance.

III. Their stay-at-home tendency; their feminine nature; comparison with Fanny Burney's heroines; womanly outlook; little revolt; roles of sexes; feminine penetration; Jane Austen's view about woman.

IV. Essentially feminine and virtuous; amiable; search for a rational woman; Jane Austen's ideal.

CHAPTER VI: LOVE AND MARRIAGE

I. Woman's interest in marriage; Jane Austen's conception of love; love and social forces; parental authority; restraint and decency; feminine shyness; social aspect; study of courtship.

II. Marriage in women's world; the pattern of marriage; evasion of love and love-scenes; outdoor talks, walks, proposals; undercurrent of love; identical events; symptoms of love; involvement of feelings; study of proposals.

III. Marriage; important social event; requisites of a happy marriage; love and matrimony; the economic basis of society.

IV. Foundation of love in the Jane Austen world; other requirements for a successful marriage; mutual
understanding, time factor in love, essentially good nature, compatibility of tempers, gratitude, merit, fortune, friends, seniority of man in age and intellect; union of masculine and feminine traits.

CHAPTER VII: WOMAN AND FAMILY

Family—woman's proper sphere; other relationships in family; husband and wife.

I. Woman as sister; the artistic use of the relationship.
II. Parent-child relationship.
III. Woman as aunt.
IV. Women neighbours; servants.

CHAPTER VIII: WOMEN NOT SO AGREEABLE

I. Norm of an ideal woman; natural folly; calculated evil; agreeable bores; disgusting ones; masculine and vain women; imposing and over-bearing women; some bores in the novels.
II. Lady Catherine and Mrs. Bennet; unique and interesting bores; their study.
III. Women bores in later novels; Mrs. Norris, Mrs. Elton, Miss Bates.
IV. Jane Austen's generous attitude towards female fools; fools in earlier novels; fools in later novels; fascination in disagreeable women; elderly women as fools; poetic justice.
V. Their role in the novels; the way they are made interesting and memorable.

CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

Contemporary novelists on woman and her position; Jane Austen's immediate female precursors; her vision; her perception for feminine peculiarities.

I. General attitude towards woman; its manifestations; revolt against traditional views; conservative novelists and moralists; the Feminist Movement and Jane Austen.

II. Her study of women in relation to society; her heroines as amiable creatures; their feminine characteristics.

III. Realistic and balanced outlook towards woman; liking for womanly woman; appeal of womanly aspect of woman.