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Q. 20. Analyse the theme of *Pride and Prejudice*, bringing out the appropriateness of the title of the novel.

Or

Write a note on the meaning and significance of the title *Pride and Prejudice*.

Or

Explain the meaning of the title of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, giving illustrations from the text.

Or

How are pride and prejudice ultimately reconciled in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*? Discuss.

Or

Analyse the theme of *Pride and Prejudice*, bringing out the appropriateness of the title of the novel.

Or

"Jane Austen described life as a matrimonial game." How far do you agree with this statement?

Or

Select any scene from *Pride and Prejudice* and comment on the qualities which make the scene memorable.

Or

Jane Austen 'never goes out of the Parlour, but works with two or three families in country.' Justify.

Ans.

The Title of the Novel

The originally intended title of the novel under question was *First Impressions*. But Miss Austen changed it later on as *Pride and Prejudice*. This title of the novel is taken from the moral drawn in Fanny Burney's *Cecilia*: "The whole of this unfortunate business.....has been the result of pride and prejudice." The whole of the misfortune, though temporary of the characters in Jane Austen's novel, has been the result of pride and prejudice. The title shows the characteristics of Darcy and Elizabeth, the pride of one and prejudice of the other. In the end the dichotomy between pride and prejudice results in a happy union of love leading to marriage when the misunderstandings caused by first impressions are removed. The novelist successfully proves that our first impressions are not always the right ones. Thus in the end, both pride and prejudice are reconciled

to true affection and tied in marriage, and this in a nutshell is the theme of *Pride and Prejudice*. The title is suitable to the theme of the novel.

The Main Theme of the Novel

The main theme of her novels is the search for husbands for girls of marriageable age. The arrival of Mr. Bingley and Darcy provides the suitable atmosphere of husband hunting campaign. The concern of the novelist is with the matrimonial game of her characters. The love affairs of Jane and Bingley, and Lydia-Wickham relationships display the youthful vigour of youths. The Collins-Charlotte episode also shows that life is simply a matrimonial game. Lydia-Wickham episodes also surround the problem of love and marriage. Miss Austen never goes out of the parlour. She stresses affairs in a drawing room — money, snobbery, lust, inducements, seductions, balls, love-jealousies, and the like form the main salad of her novels as *Pride and Prejudice*.

In this novel, the novelist describes the matrimonial relations of Bennets and the Lucases, the affairs of men and women, arising from sex, love and marriage. The central theme is the husband hunting campaign of Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Lucas for their marriageable daughter. They strive to choose suitable husbands for daughters. The arrival of Bingley and his friend Darcy activate the theme. The Jane-Bingley love story and the clash of pride and prejudice between Darcy and Elizabeth accelerates the action of the story.

To quote David Cecil, "Jane Austen's English drawing-rooms are theatres in which elemental human folly and inconsistency play out their eternal comedy." The marriage intentions of Mrs. Bennet show that life is nothing but a matrimonial game. Lady Catherine tries to prevent Elizabeth from marrying her nephew. Lydia flirts with the military officers and being unchecked she even elopes with Wickham.

Jane Austen in her novels has shown that mutual harmony is necessary for a successful marriage. Mrs. Bennet measures the matrimonial ties with wealth. She considers Bingley a suitable match for Jane due to his large fortune. She says, "A single man of a large fortune four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls." But the novelist proves that marriage is a union of good persons of similar natures and temperaments. The real object of marriage is not home and housekeeping, parish and poultry, but something higher. It is companionship, and intellectual and emotional association between husband and wife, and she would not approve of marriage where such an associations is wanting.

Reconciliation between Pride and Prejudice

During his first meeting with Elizabeth Bingley, at the ball dance, Darcy creates a bad impression, seeming cold and extremely proud. In particular, he insults Elizabeth Bennet, a girl of spirit and intelligence and her father's favourite. He refuses to dance with her when she is sitting down for lack of a partner, and he says in her hearing that he is in no mood to prefer young ladies slighted by other men. On future occasions, however, he begins to admire Elizabeth in spite of himself. At a later ball

she has the satisfaction of refusing him to dance. During her visit to Bingley's house where Elizabeth had gone to meet her ailing sister Jane, she receives enough attention from Darcy. Elizabeth acquires a new admirer in the person of Mr. Collins, a ridiculously pompous clergyman and a distant cousin of the Bennets. He proposes to Elizabeth. Much to her mother's displeasure and her father's joy, she firmly and promptly rejects him. He immediately transfers his affections to Elizabeth's best friend, Charlotte Lucas who accepts at once his offer of marriage.

Elizabeth becomes unduly prejudiced against Darcy, partly because of his pride and partly because of the false presentation of his character by Wickham. But as the story progresses, Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy and Darcy's pride against Elizabeth are removed, and eventually they are married. In their case again, Jane Austen approves of the marriage of similar natures and temperaments.

The Most Memorable Scene

The first scene of the novel is most interesting and memorable. Mrs. Bennet, the mother of five girls of marriage age tries to persuade Mr. Bingley to marry some of her daughters. She is fascinated by the wealth and personality of Mr. Bingley. Sir William and Lady Lucas showed interest at the arrival of this young man, for they too had daughters to marry. Mr. Bennet meets himself with Mr. Bingley in spite of his refusal. The first scene shows that the chief concern of the parents is to search for economic values. We come to know the pride and prejudice of Darcy and Elizabeth despite their mutual relations.

This scene depicts the source of conflict in the novel. It introduces us to the nature of Mrs. Bennet. The character of her husband is also revealed in this scene, and it is further important from the point of character revelation. Leonard Woolf comments : "The social standards are almost entirely those of money and snobbery. Everyone of the novels ends happily because the heroine, in spite of difficulties, marries above herself."

school of English fiction, which found other contemporary exponents in Henry Mackenzie and Fanny Burney. These writers are the direct descendants of Defoe, Fielding and Smollett, and the direct ancestors of Dickens, Thackeray, and Arnold Bennet. But they are influenced by the Romantic Movement, even though it does not change their course. While avoiding the fantastic and sensational and confining themselves to much the same sort of subject as their predecessors—that is, ordinary English life in their own day they nevertheless treat that subject in a rather different manner.

Q. 23. Show that Jane Austen's novels are steeped in irony. Add illustrative quotations from the novels you have read.

Or

"She expresses the economic basis of social behaviour with an ironic smile." Comment on this estimate of Jane Austen's art with special reference to *Pride and Prejudice*.

Or

What do you understand by 'irony'? Illustrate Jane Austen's use of it in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Or

"There is pervasive irony in *Pride and Prejudice*." Discuss and give instances of irony in the plot and characterization of the novel.

Or

"Jane Austen's irony is comic, not tragic." Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

Or

In *Pride and Prejudice* there is irony in the style, in every character, and in the whole story. Amplify.

Or

Show that *Pride and Prejudice* is conceived in irony.

Or

"Irony is the most potent weapon of Jane Austen in her fight against shame and illusions." Amplify.

Or

"Jane Austen interprets life ironically and her interpretation is humane, never satirical or indignant." Justify.

Ans. 'Irony' is the expression of one's meaning by saying some thing which is the direct opposite of one's thoughts. Thus, in literature, irony is a kind of stylistic device, a mode of speech which enables the speaker to convey his meaning by means of a contrast between the thought which he designs to express and that which his words actually signify. Irony is the soul of Jane Austen's comedy. It pervades every twist of the story of *Pride and Prejudice*. It penetrates the whole structure of the novel. It is delicate and devoid of bitterness. It is more subtle than to be found in the writings of Addison. Even the cruellest shafts of Jane Austen's irony are

feathered with bright streamers of humour. Very seldom did she intend to wound deeply. This irony is to be found not only in speech or character but also in the style and the arrangement of the incidents.

Jane Austen's irony is consummate and all pervasive. In *Pride and Prejudice*, it is to be seen in her style, in almost every character (with the possible exception of Jane and Bingley) and in the whole story. Verbal irony, irony of situation, irony of character, irony of life, in short, irony of every kind is to be found in the novel. Every kind of folly and affectation, self-deception, lack of knowledge of one self, receives ironical treatment. It is ridiculed and exposed at every step. "Her fiction is steeped in irony both of language and situation." Irony is the weapon through which she emphasizes reality and ridicules affectations. She is a great mistress of irony; she can use it as a stylistic technique of reversal, or at least transformation.

Irony runs through the very fabric of *Pride and Prejudice*. The setting of the novel is ironical. In the beginning, Darcy is proud and does not consider Jane as good enough for him even for a dance. Elizabeth is prejudiced and considers him proud and snobbish. But ironically enough, as the story proceeds, their attitudes undergo a gradual reversal, and it all ends in their loving each other. The irony consists in their not realizing from the very beginning the fact of their love. Further, Darcy tried to prevent his friend Bingley from marrying Jane because he found the Bennets vulgar and coarse. But ironically enough, he himself ends in falling in love with a member of that very family.

Elizabeth had disliked Darcy for his pride, but by the end of the novel she discovers that she herself has been guilty of pride in her own opinions. Even the reversal of attitude of Elizabeth towards Darcy may be ironically linked up with her visit to Pemberley. In life, and so in *Pride and Prejudice*, everything happens contrary to one's expectations. The unexpected may sometimes be desired and sometimes undesired. But in Austen's novels it is always the unexpected that leads to desired results. Her irony is comic and not tragic. The elopement of Lydia with Wickham was supposed to ruin the prospects of Elizabeth and the Bennets, but quite to the contrary, the episode reveals the essential nobility of Darcy, dispels Elizabeth's prejudices, and so paves the way for her marriage with Darcy. Charlotte accepts Mr. Collins' proposal and is well-settled in life. It was generally thought that Elizabeth had acted rather foolishly, but quite to the contrary she secures a much better match. The visit of Catherine de Bourgh instead of having the result she desired, serves rather to bring Darcy and Elizabeth together.

Wickham is the best example of the irony of character. He is handsome, graceful, polished and refined in his manners. But at heart he is a villain. So does Darcy. He appears proud and snobbish but is essentially noble at heart. Things are often not what they seem, and one must beware in forming judgments. The irony is also seen in the character of the two Miss Bingleys who hate the Bennets for being vulgar, but are themselves in their treatment of Elizabeth.

Ironical situations abound in the novel. Collins proposes to Elizabeth just at a moment when her heart is too full of Wickham, and so is summarily rejected. Miss Bingley teases Elizabeth regarding her fascination for Wickham, and in this reminds Darcy of the near elopement of his own sister with him. The novelist, says Baker, "seems to be counting every nail that Miss Bingley, drives in her own coffin in this way." The departure of the regiment from Maryton to Brighton is welcomed as this would put an end to the flirtation of Lydia, but it leads to her elopement.

We have enough of verbal irony too. Verbal irony means the use of language with meaning opposite to the one intended. Every sentence and every piece of dialogue is ironical. Mr. Bennet always uses an ironical language whenever he talks to his wife. On the very first page of the novel, we get the sentence, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." This is Jane Austen's comment on the husband-hunting campaigns of people like the Bennets and the Lucases. Many more such examples would readily come to the mind of the readers.

Thus Jane Austen's irony is the most potent weapon in her hands in her fight against shams, illusions, affectations, silliness, pride, snobbery, prejudices, etc. But her irony is never bitter. It does not wound; she rather amuses by exposing the folly of her characters. Humour is an essential ingredient in her irony. She brings out the inconsistencies of character and action by her ironical treatment. Her irony is Addisonian and not bitter like that of Swift.

Q. 24. "Satire is the element in which Jane Austen lives, but there is no trace of the savage indignation of Swift in her writing." Discuss.

Ans. Jane Austen was not a satirist in the strict sense of the word, as her satire is free from any passionate motives of reformation. Her chief aim in writing novels was just to entertain and provide amusement to the readers. She was absorbed with the comedy of human folly, but her satire is mischievous rather than malicious. She was not at heart a good hater or a misanthropist like Swift. She did not even really despise the most ridiculous either of her creations or her acquaintances. But she could not seldom resist her favourite weapons of irony and satire. Her attitude as a satirist is best expressed in the words of Elizabeth when she says :

"I hope, I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can."

It is perfectly obvious that her satire was completely sympathetic. It pursued many objects and took many forms. In her novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*, she satirizes that romantic philosophy which was sweeping the world in the early nineteenth century. In *Northanger Abbey*, she laughs at its superficial aspects. Catherine Morland is a simple girl who is always making a fool of herself because she expects life to be like the romantic novels which are her favourite reading. *Sense and Sensibility* is a more fundamental attack. Elinor Dashwood guides her conduct by reason; Marianne by the impulses of