

Female Psyche and Empowerment of Jane Austen and Lakshmi's Select Novels

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at analyzing the occidental and oriental works of literary art with special reference to the select novels of Jane Austen and Lakshmi. Women novelists have a strong foundation of social awareness and concentration on family welfare. This article interprets Jane Austen's three novels - Sense and Sensibility Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield park and two of Lakshmi's novels - Penn Manam and Oru Kaveriyai Pola. This study except the first and the last are significantly titled implying the different strategies of female predicaments amidst which Jane Austen and Lakshmi have set afloat their women characters there by justifying the dichotomy of the women psyche and empowerment of their life. These two novelists have proved and predicted the female psyche to be of the same mould despite belonging to varied

cultures. A nostalgic representative of the classical 18th century, Jane Austen was poised more in reason rather than emotion. Jane Austen wrote about what she had experienced in her life. Hers is a world of the country middle class people. She deals with various aspects of love and marriage and views them calmly and dispassionately. She distrusts emotion and describes it only by implication.

Lakshmi from Tamilnadu is a strong flavour of Tamil literature and culture in her novels. She has a strong perception regarding the treatment of women in the Tamil society and is very bold in portraying their emotions kaleidoscopically. Irrespective of their education, women don't have equitable rights on a par with their male counterparts in the society. The core theme of the novels of Lakshmi centers round the problems of women and their rights in the society. Woman is the backbone of the family in

turn which is the quintets entail unit of the society. She intended to promote the role of women in the society. She tries to portray the feuds in the family and woman's tender heartedness in the backdrop of Tamil tradition and Indian Culture.

This review is based on the hypothesis that the characters depicted by Jane Austen and Lakshmi are always in the process of development. They undergo the process of self-delusion, disillusionment, reconciliation, awakening and empowerment. This gradual process of empowerment and female predicaments prove their obsession with the 'is' thinking process involving women with the imperative that women should not resort to teleological thinking.

Introduction

The world is in a state of flux, and the need for a unifying force is gaining importance. Comparative literature is one such force which goes beyond man-made barriers. It establishes that human nature remains the same everywhere comparative study of literatures across cultures is only an extension and intensification of healthy critical procedures adopted by sensitive readers of literature in all periods and cultures. It is on the basis of these concepts that the present attempt proposes to make a

comparative study of the select novels of **Jane Austen and Lakshmi**. These two novelists portrait the female predicaments and their empowerment to prove to have a universal appeal.

The empowering attitude of women of **Jane Austen** heroines Elizabeth Bennett, Elinor Dashwood, Marianne, and Fanny Price. It makes a comparative sociological study of these characters with **Lakshmi's** two novels and the predominant female characters **Chandra, Ambujam, Hemalatha in Penmanam and Kaveri in Oru Kaveriyai Pola**. All the women characters involved in the five novels and highlights their struggle for social status in terms of love and marriage. It also elevates how women get transformed and activated by the display of their psyche. The women characters Elizabeth Bennett in **Pride and Prejudice**, Marianne and Elinor in **Sense and Sensibility**, Fanny Price in **Mansfield park** and **Chandra**, in Lakshmi's **Pen Manam** and **Kaveri in Oru Kaveriyai Pola** have been compared, contrasted and paralleled in order to derive at a universalisation of the female psyche.

The social issues in the Occidental and Oriental world, interpreting their variations in terms of Poverty, Love and Marriage. All the heroines in all the five novels find themselves suffering under

overlapping disadvantages pertaining to material, family, social and personal categories. In **Sense and Sensibility** the familial bonds are inadequate. In **Pride and Prejudice** poverty is a future menace, and inevitability is again the cause. In **Mansfield park**, Fanny Price is a radically insecure and traumatized personality. In **Lakshmi's Penn Manam** the blend of egoistic principles constitute their predicaments over which women have no control. In **Oru Kaviriyai Pola** the heroine is an embodiment of superego and the social and familial milieu constitute the determinants to her emancipation as a woman. The conflict between the superego and the socio-familial milieu both in the Oriental east and Occidental west have been examined vividly.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST IN JANE AUSTEN AND LAKSHMI HEROINES

One conspicuous feature in Jane Austen's novels is that her heroines are surrounded by manifold characters whereas in Lakshmi's novels, it is not so. It is isolation because of ideals that makes Lakshmi's women stand aloof. This tells of the difference between English social life and that of India. Jane Austen through the portrayal of social life untethers her

women from emotional and social tangles. In Lakshmi's novel's, it is her women's psychology that dispels the forces of the *Id* and shows traces of the domination of the *Super Ego*. However, in the evolution of her women, we notice that they are never off balance. They prove themselves to be the embodiments of the reality principle in life to maintain balance and averting extremes, the sure signs of despair.

A few heroines in fiction evoke our interest and we feel much for them, love them and transpose ourselves in their place. This happens in the case of Kaviri. Wit, Womanliness, lovely grace, sprightly frankness, delicate sense, swift and keen intellect are the distinctive characteristics of the heroines of both Jane Austen and Lakshmi. But these are not combinatorially present in them. They stand dispersed and noticeable in them. Apart from these traits, there is one trait which stands out very distinctively in the women of Lakshmi. That is unassailable firmness and determination. Chandra and Kaviri excel in these traits.

Jane Austen's characters come within a wide range Lakshmi's characters fall within a narrow range in semi-rural locations. Lakshmi and Jane Austen draw the characters from their personal experience. The middle class novel of the

eighteenth century in England through the middle class values and look, Lakshmi's novels deal with the regional middle class, especially women and their dilemma particularly that which is generated due to the circumstantial compulsion that makes them come into contact with wealthy men deformed in character. Lakshmi like Jane Austen takes to deal with the manners of her times in the Tamil middle class society dominated by males.

FEMALE PSYCHE AND EMPOWERMENT OF THE JANE AUSTEN AND LAKSHMI HEROINES

The heroine of Lakshmi's **Oru Kaviriyai Pola** bears a close resemblance to Jane Austen's Fanny Price in **Mansfield Park**. Fanny Price is meek and modest. Kaviri is modest and assertive. The modesty of Fanny pervades throughout the novel and pertains to Crawford. But in **Oru Kaviriyai Pola**, Kaviri's modesty pervades but it has its reach to her brother and sisters-in-law, her profession as a nurse and her male, much to her liking Damodaran.

Just as Anne who improves upon the characters in Fanny Price, Kaviri improves her personality because of the

strictness and deceit of her younger sister-in-law, ideal affection of her elder sister-in-law and Damodaran. Fanny Price and Anne Eliot and victims of men and fortune. So is Kaviri. The proposed marriage of Kaviri with one Mohan gets annulled owing to the latter's fancy for marrying another woman of large fortune. This is the starting point of her iron resolve to stand against oddities in life. For the reason of suffering from men and fortune, Fanny Price and Anne Eliot appeal more to our emotion than intellect. But in the case of Kaviri, the appeal is both to our emotion and intellect, the former because of her sufferings at home and in India and the latter because she, despite all trammels stands to self-overcome and transforms into a super woman.

Elinor Dashwood in **Sense and Sensibility** bears close resemblance to Chandra in Lakshmi's **Penn Manam**. Both of them are obsessed with a moral centre of feeling. What they want is honour and life attached to that. But Elinor commits herself to emotional involvement which is absent in Chandra. Yet her emotion is not dilating because she controls her feelings for the sake of her mother and sisters and to situation turns dramatic. But Chandra's circumstances also are dramatic, for she is sought after by

a won for her beauty, intelligence, bearing and reservedness. At times Elinor dilates, but chandra stands stubborn, a quality that transforms itself to one of resolve to win, particularly after the marriage with Jaganathan for whom she has no liking. But her inherent obduracy fortifies her psychologically amidst the distance her in-laws maintain at Jaganathan's fraud. Her sense of belonging is thus awakened. Between Elinor and Chandra, we find the sense of belonging which is familial. Elinor's sister Marianne's happiness is on par with Chandra's friend Ambujam's. The latter is one with a blank mind, believing as good whichever appears good, in her case, her husband himself. After learning of his affairs with a woman before his marriage with her, she is beset and it is chandra like Elinor who becomes her mentor. This, despite Chandra's predicament of bearing the slur of her husband. When challenge comes, chandra counters it with iron resolve. This is chandra's empowerment. But Elinor's empowerment rests on her heart's tranquility which corroborates with her acceptance of Edward.

Penn Manam of Lakshmi is another **Pride and prejudice**. Darcy's pride and Elizabeth Bennet's prejudice are

combinatorially present in the prime protagonist of **Penn Manam**. This apart, one finds that chandra is uneasily as a determiner. Elizabeth Bennet's prejudice against Darcy is present in chandra with her detest for Jagannathan's efforts to entangle her in the marital bond. However Jane Austen with her inventive technique prolongs Elizabeth's gradual intimacy with Darcy. It undergoes various vicissitudes until the last when his pride and her prejudice dilute and wane into nothing. Comparatively, when we look at the happenings in **Penn Manam**, we find that Chandra's pride and prejudice undergo the process of reasoning and there stems self-respect which dominates in Chandra's undertaking to resuscitate her husband's lost reputation. She strives towards its revival. In **Pride and Prejudice**, it is a journey towards casement whereas in **Penn Manam**, it is an exhibition of self – over coming from the abysmal depths of despondency of the protagonist. While in **Pride and Prejudice**, the protagonist's development is gradual, it is empowerment of resolve in **Penn Manam**.

CONCLUSION

Considered as a whole, we find that Jane Austen's women are slow in their development which is purely sociological. It is their *id* of the genuine kind that

propels their motives, actions and adjustments. They are not stubborn psychologically speaking contrastively Lakshmi's women are natured even at the outset and they proceed about in their pursuits in a resolute way. But chandra appears an exception. Even though she lacks any ideal, it is her resolution and independence that makes her encounter life's ironies with a will to surmount. The society is friendly to Jane Austen's women. But this is quite opposite in Lakshmi. All women suffer of the ternary of the society. Hence her women are projected as embodiments of psychological strength. Jane Austen's women dilate in situations whereas Lakshmi's women do not. They provide succor to even to their friends. Ambujam and Hemalatha in **Penn Manam** are examples. The subsidiary women characters in **Oru Kaviriyai Pola** give added inner courage to Kaviri when she is stranded physically and bankrupt spiritually. Estimated comparatively, the women of Jane Austen rare specimens of social realities. Whereas lakshmi's women are incarnations of the will to will and there by empower themselves to stand firm.

Jane Austen and Lakshmi though they belong to different sociological landscape have vividly viewed their

female characters and have ultimately proved women to be in their home lands inspite of the space being antagonistic and their peace often seems to be ephemeral. Both the novelists have universalized the female predicaments where the psychological views of the women environment have simultaneously played a predominant role in which they struggle for empowerment and ultimately succeed.

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