UNIT 8: JANE AUSTEN: *MANSFIELD PARK* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE:

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to

- read the novel in terms of the various important aspects related to the novel *Mansfield Park*
- explain the important themes of the novel
- discuss the plot, characterisation, and narrative technique in *Mansfield Park*
- make an assessment of the reception of the novel over the period of time since its publication

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a follow up unit of the previous unit, which deals more specifically with the novel *Mansfield Park*. Through this novel, Jane Austen explores certain attitudes and conducts of the middle class people or the bourgeois class in England during her time. Austen wrote the novel to portray the quietest and least outgoing heroine Fanny Price and to depict the Mansfield Park Estate of Thomas Bertram as the theatre of action involving Fanny, the novels protagonist, and Bertram's

own sons and daughters. This unit thus aims to present a comprehensive analysis of *Mansfield Park,* the critical reception of the novel over the years, and a few important themes that include love, friendship, matrimony and family. A brief introduction to Austen's art of characterisation through an analysis of the important characters of the novel shall also find due place in this unit.

8.3 READING THE NOVEL

Mansfield Park has been considered by most of the critics to be Jane Austen's most serious work. But, for some readers, this seriousness is also an impediment to our understanding of the novel, which refuses to fit into the critical stereotypes to see Austen as a moralist or a satirist. In 1923, Virginia Woolf wrote that "of all great writers, Jane Austen is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness." The same comment can be applied regarding greatness of *Mansfield Park.* Lionel Trilling observes: "No one I believe, has ever found it possible to like the heroine of *Mansfield Park*" (*Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Ed. Boris Ford). General readers too found Fanny Price not as Vivacious, witty and energetic as Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice.* However, recent criticism has seen the novel from various approaches–feminist, historicist and social, and moralistic. All these critical approaches have their own spokesman. An important critical inquiry of her come from Mary Evan's reading of the novel in her "Jane Austen and the State", where Austen has been shown as a proponent of liberalism. Thomas Bertram is considered representative of a repressive regime and the very metaphor of Mansfield Park denotes male authority. Post- colonial critics look at the novel as a critic of colonial expansion citing the character of Thomas Bertram. Edward Said's reading of the novel in his essay "Jane Austen and Empire" in his book *Culture and Imperialism* viewed that the world depicted in *Mansfield Park* is characterised by discourses on power. Many other critics have read the novel from their respective theoretical approaches. In the following subsections, we shall try to discuss the various important aspects of the novel.

8.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are the important themes in the novel *Mansfield Park.*

Colonial Slave Trade:

Vladimir Nabokov in his Cornell University lectures on *Mansfield Park* regards Sir Thomas as important to the formal structure of the novel. It is because, he helps in understanding that "the source of the Bertram money" resides in the "cheap slave labor" operating in Sir Thomas's Antiguan plantations. For Nabokov, the "West Indies Estate" is functionally necessary to the structure of the novel, which requires Sir Thomas to leave Mansfield Park. In his view, details of such as Sir Thomas's Antigua possessions are not elaborated in the novel so that Jane Austen can use a pointed critique of Britain's colonial empire and practices, or the wealth of the Bertram family and how they use and misuse their wealth.

You should also note that **Edward W. Said**, uses Mansfield Park estate in the opening chapter of his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and aims to show that colonialism plays an important role in a novelist like Austen. According to Said, the Bertram fortunes are sustained by exploitation of slave labour on Sir Thomas's Antigua estates and plantations. Further, Fanny Price herself can be seen as a "transported commodity". At one point, Edward Said implicated the novel in western culture's casual acceptance of the material benefits of slavery and imperialism, citing Austen's omission to mention that the estate of Mansfield Park was made possible only through slave labour. At another point, however, he seems to have acknowledged that Jane Austen disapproved of slavery.

Critic such as **Gabrielle White**, however, has criticised Said's condemnation of Jane Austen and western culture, maintaining that Austen and other writers, including Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke, opposed slavery and helped make its eventual abolition possible. It is also a concern for some critics that Jane Austen was sublimely

indifferent to the outside world. Such critics suggest that *Mansfield Park* was written at the height of the Napoleonic War, yet the war is barely even mentioned in this or any other of her novels. The Industrial Revolution was in full swing and the country was in turmoil as a result, again there was barely a mention. Similarly, her novels contain not a single mention of the steam engine, the growth of the manufacturing cities or even the turnip (which had a much more profound effect on the British economy than any plant with the exception of cotton). She even manages to omit any mention of the abolition of the slave trade of 1808, four years before she started the novel and the culmination of a huge, controversial public campaign.

Question of Morality and Active Principle:

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen presents the military and the Church as the two serious professions that potentially support the country in a difficult time, the one defending it abroad, the other stiffening moral fibre at home and establishing those principles for which men were fighting. These 'active' principles are what the patriarchal Sir Thomas Bertram finds lacking in most of the inhabitants of Mansfield Park, but which his niece Fanny Price, with her fortuitous conjunction of humility and self-esteem, 'struggles' to uphold. Thomas himself is compromised not only by his presumed ownership of slaves in Antigua (the disordered colonial plantations may be linked to disorder in the English home) but primarily by his insidious arrogance, which allows him to treat his family as commodities. The moral deficiency within the novel is foreshadowed in the satirical opening of the first chapter, where the three middle-class sisters are assessed in monetary not moral terms by their mercenary lawyer uncle, and enter into a lifetime of sexual and social rivalry. The eldest two marry Sir Thomas Bertram and the Reverend Mr Norris respectively, with no mention of love. The third marries a lowly lieutenant of marines, presumably for love and no money, thereby disobliging her family. All lack balance between prudence and romance, love and self-interest.

Proper Education:

Related to morality and principle is also the issue of proper education which is a prominent concern of Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*. Almost all the characters in the novel are associated with the theme in one way or the other. Here education signifies that kind of education which controls passions, regulates temper, cultivates reason and guides the action of the characters. Jane Austen is finally successful in creating characters who either acquire a high social status due to their principled education or are doomed to suffer throughout their life due to their faulty education. Here education is not necessarily academic education, rather the adaptation of just values from experience and atmosphere. Apart from Fanny and to some extent Edmund, most of the major characters do not possess just values due to their negligence towards an adequate system of education.

Love and Matrimony:

Like her other novels, love is very crucial in *Mansfield Park*. Her interest in young people and in their love and courtship, in fact, is a major subject in *Mansfield Park.* In the novel, the novelist is preoccupied with the responsibility of making matches for her heroes and heroines. Somehow, the concept of love in the novel is guided by emotion and calculation. Fanny's love for Edmund is beyond any artificiality and selfish motive. However, the other girls are not as serious as Fanny. For instance, the illicit relationship between Maria and Henry is steered by some temporary excitement and frail feeling. To an extent, Henry flirts with the girls in the name of love. He even proposes to Fanny, but she refuses his proposal since she knows the nature of Henry. In most of the cases, however, love is a means to get someone. As a result, the theme of matrimony becomes central to the plot. Therefore, parties, dances, theatres, gatherings, travel etc. become crucial elements in the overall design of the plot. The preparation for staging Elizabeth Inchbald's play *Lover's Vows* in Mansfield Park is such a design for which various love affairs in the plot set the plot in motion.



LET US KNOW

What contributes most to Jane Austen's universal popularity?

Her ability to create the illusion of psychologically believable and self-reflecting characters is perhaps the most enduring quality of her as a novelist. Her novels are investigations of selfhood, particularly female, the oscillating relationship of feeling and reason, the interaction of present and past memory, and the constant negotiation between desire and society. Charlotte Bronte memorably wrote that Austen avoided the passions, that she rejected 'even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy Sisterhood'. Although in a mode quite different from Bronte, Jane Austen–sometimes ironic, rarely unrestrained–has nonetheless become a passionate writer.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How does Austen treat the theme of love and matrimony in the novel?

Q 2: How does Austen present the idea of education in the novel you are reading?

Q 3: Do you think that the novel reflects on British colonial activities?

Q 4: What do you understand by the term 'the little bit of Ivory'?

8.5 AUSTEN'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Mansfield Park presents a variety of characters that have movements and vitality. The following is a brief discussion on the major characters of the novel.

Fanny Price:

Fanny probably is the least liked of all Jane Austen's heroines, whose own mother "thought Fanny insipid," although some of her close relatives found her "a delightful Character!" We meet Fanny when she is

only 10. She is small and physically fragile, when she is sent to Mansfield Park. Throughout the 19th century there is little critical attention paid to Fanny. It is interesting to note that **Reginald Farrer** in a review of the book in *Quarterly Review* in July 1917, assessed Fanny as a "penniless dull little nobody." But contrary to such views other critics like **Lionel Trilling** (1957) declared, "Nobody, I believe, has ever found it possible to like the heroine of" the novel" and proceeded to declare that Fanny is close to saintliness. Positive reviews also came from **Tony Tanner** (1966), who sees Fanny as "never, ever wrong." Although feminist and political readings of the novel have focused attention away from Fanny, critical reactions have still to encompass the hostility she endures. Her absence from her Portsmouth family gives her a tremendous feeling of loneliness and, except for Edmund's kindness, she is very often mistreated in her new home. Edmund tells her, "There is no reason in the world why you should not be important where you are known." Fanny becomes the chief companion of Lady Bertram, to whom she often attends. She believes, unlike Mary, in his choice of the church as a career and does not agree with the theatricals in the absence of Sir Thomas, refusing to participate in them. She is also one who perceives that Henry Crawford is playing games with Maria's and Julia's affections. Being a Cinderella figure, previously she is afraid of Sir Thomas Bertram and continually suffers from the mal-treatment of Mrs. Norris. Upon his return from Antigua, Sir Thomas's attitude toward her is transformed into one of considerable kindness, especially after he understands that Fanny alone had refused to be part of the theatrical activities. Fanny shows a considerable affinity for nature and gardens, their naturalness and development.

There are various stages in her progress in the novel. The first is Fanny's movement to Mansfield Park from Portsmouth. The second is the return home of Sir Thomas following his Antigua trip. This stage culminates in Crawford's proposal. In the third stage, Fanny returns with her beloved brother, William, to her Portsmouth home, where she spent her early years. This visit is an important part of her Bildungsroman—her growing up and maturing. Contrary to her expectations in Portsmouth,



One of the significant qualities of the novel is that Austen writes precise prose but is on the side of Fanny and her aunt Lady Bertram whose feelings are the key to understand *Mansfield Park*. Fanny remains true to herself and is independent in spite of her circumstances.

she finds "closeness and noise ... ... confinement, bad air, bad smells." Her negative reaction to her new environment soon becomes visible. When she returns to Mansfield Park, she becomes aware that "Edmund was no longer the dupe of Mary Crawford''. This is the fourth and final stage in her development. She is united with Edmund, although still "timid, anxious, doubting as she was" and obtains "a delightful happiness." Thus, Fanny is indeed a complex heroine; it is no wonder that she has provoked diverse reactions since the days of her initial creation. She becomes "Mrs. Bertram" and hence the intended pun "Price-less"!

Thomas Bertram:

A baronet and a Member of Parliament, Sir Thomas Bertram is the wealthy owner of Mansfield Park. Well known for his estate management he is also the father of four children Tom, Edmund, Maria, and Julia, and the guardian and benefactor of Fanny Price, the niece of his wife. Very serious in his deportment, he is distant from his children and pays little heed to their development, relying instead, for his daughters' education, on their aunt Mrs. Norris. He is kind to Fanny Price and attempts to help her mother financially when her sons need career assistance. Indulgent to his wife, he is almost absent in Mansfield Park because of his London Parliamentary duties. Being the owner of property in Antigua in the West Indies, he takes a journey there and is therefore absent from home for almost two years to deal with certain problems related to business. While he is away, his strict regime at Mansfield Park disintegrates. He returns to Mansfield Park unexpectedly and reacts strongly to the theatricals. On his return, his attitude to Fanny becomes kinder. His concern with morality and reserve leads him to ignore the inner being, and he is sorely tested by Maria's and Julia's elopements and his eldest son's lack of character. At the conclusion of the novel, "sick of ambitious and mercenary connections" (471) threatening Mansfield Park and his family, he welcomes Fanny as his daughter-in-law. Sir Thomas is a performer sustaining his own self-interest and self-image. **Tony Tanner** in "Introduction" to the Penguin edition of *Mansfield Park* comments that Sir

Thomas Bertram is the sole lawgiver in the Mansfield Household. However, he allowed Mrs. Norris to manage his household and paid little attention to how his daughters were brought about. It is said by another critic that Sir Thomas lacks imagination and common sense regarding his children. A stern father he never allowed any ball at Mansfield Park. In his absence, therefore, his children got a chance to stage a play but before that could happen, Sir Thomas returned from Antigua. Being a conservative MP, he could never allow a play by Kotzebue to be staged in his house simply because Kotzebue had revolutionary sympathies.

Tom Bertram:

The character of Tom Bertram is always contrasted with Edmund. The eldest son of the Bertram couple, Tom, a moral opposite of Edmund, is fond of horseracing, gambling, and other more dissolute activities, Tom's debts and extravagant life soon makes him face problems. Subsequently, Sir Thomas takes him to Antigua hoping that his visit will encourage his elder son to become more seriously concerned with his financial responsibilities. However, young Tom is sent back home early and, in spite of his awareness of his father's disapproval, suggests performing a play at Mansfield Park. He prefers a comedy and chooses the sexually provocative *Lovers' Vows.* He pays little hid to his social duties and responsibilities as the head of the Mansfield estate during his father's prolonged absence. Modern critics do not dismiss Tom as a dissolute person. Jane Austen introduces Tom as a plot device, using him for his role in bringing about two important points of the novel—the staging of the play in Mansfield household, and the return of fanny from Portsmouth. Austen herself has comforting words for Tom when she says: "He had suffered, and he had learnt to think… He became what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself." From such comments, it appears that even though a moral opposite to Edmund, Tom has his own personal qualities. Even his squandering money is excused when we consider his situation as the son of a rich MP. To sum up, Tom is young, careless and full of fun and there is no other character like him in the novel who loves his life and tries to live it to the full.

Edmund Bertram:

Edmund is mostly conceived as the model for correct judgment and principles in the novel. Destined for the Church, "he was not pleasant by any common rule, he talked no nonsense, he paid no compliments, his opinions were unbending, his attentions tranquil and simple.'' Edmund's kindness and consideration are demonstrated when the 10-year-old Fanny Price first comes to Mansfield Park, whom he befriends, protects, and advises. So much so that he becomes the formative influence on the development of her personality. In spite of his subsequent romantic obsession with Mary Crawford, his friendship with Fanny never fails. As **Tony Tanner** points out, "Edmund has chosen to be a clergyman by profession," and consequently "Edmund at this moment symbolically abandons his profession, his role in life, to play at being a stage clergyman indulging in a love affair (for such is his part!)." Yet in spite of Mary's disdain for his decision to enter the Church, Edmund defends his views by emphasising the spiritual and social role of the clergyman. After visiting Mary in London and seeing her with her friends, Edmund begins to realise her superficiality and lack of principle. On his return to Mansfield from London, Edmund becomes dependent on Fanny, who is his comforter and adviser. He marries Fanny, and they initially live at Thornton Lacey, his first parish. After the death of Dr. Grant, they move to the Mansfield Parsonage.

Maria Bertram:

The eldest daughter of the Bertrams, Maria is Mrs. Norris's favourite. She is three years older than Fanny Price, and her personality is influenced more by her mean and materialistic aunt Mrs. Norris than by her expensive education, her governess, or parents. She is persuaded by aunt to become engaged to the wealthy and well-connected Mr. Rushworth although she harbours no love for him. She takes the leading role in the theatrical performance of *Lovers' Vows* from her sister, and in revenge for Henry Crawford's accompanying Julia on the box to Sotherton, shamelessly flirts with him during the theatricals. She is the first to break out of the restraints of her marriage and elopes

with Henry Crawford. Rushworth divorces Maria, and she bitterly quarrels with Henry Crawford, who also refuses to marry her. She is forced to return home. However, her father punishes her by sending her to live away from Mansfield Park with her aunt Norris. **Claudia Johnson's** feminist reading of the novel sees Maria and Julia, attempting desperately to free themselves from "a code of female propriety" imposed by their father, who misreads his daughters.

Julia Bertram:

The younger daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, Julia is a year younger than her sister, Maria, and two years older than Fanny Price. Educated with Maria by her aunt Norris, whose values are: "give a girl an education [a superficial one], and introduce her properly into the world, and then to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to any body." She is indulged by her aunt to grow up believing that she and her sister are "the finest young women in the country". Being the younger daughter, she is not spoiled as much as Maria by Mrs. Norris, and is more controllable. She is jealous of Maria for being Henry Crawford's favourite. Consequently, she refuses to participate in the Mansfield theatricals. In London, she meets Mr. Yates again, whom she allows, without much enthusiasm, to court her. Following Maria's elopement with Henry Crawford, and fearful of the consequences for her father's severity, she agrees to elope with Yates. Too bound up with her own pursuit of pleasure, in short, being a hedonist, she is unable to return to Mansfield to comfort her brother in his illness, or to be a friend to Fanny. Julia has received scant critical attention except as an example of a jealous sister, whose temper was "more controllable" than Maria's. She is not seen in a conversation with her sister, with whom she competes unsuccessfully to play the role of a lover, in the performance of *Lovers' Vows.*

Henry Crawford:

Henry has an estate at Everingham in Norfolk and is very flirtatious with sophisticated manners and taste. Forever playing a part, acting, performing, he seems to wish his own self, his own personality and

position, would disappear. Thus, when he listens to William, he desires to be in his place and to be a sailor. When he listens to Edmund, he wishes to be a clergyman. Able to converse with almost everyone about his or her interests, he is a good listener and an outstanding actor in the Mansfield theatricals. Even though she does not approve of the theatricals, Fanny admires Henry's performance, and when she is most suspicious of him, she is fascinated by his readings from Shakespeare. Henry obviously enjoys tempting women into relationships and leading them up the garden path. He plays games with Julia's feelings and flirts remorselessly during the theatricals with Maria, giving her misleading signals, although he is aware of her engagement to Rushworth. Henry helps twice to destroy the tranquility of Mansfield Park: through his participation in the theatricals and his elopement with the married Maria, whom he refuses to marry. He pursues Fanny and proposes to her, placing her in a difficult situation with her Mansfield family. For a commentator like Kathryn Sutherland, Henry and Mary Crawford belong to a world of metropolitan tastes, conspicuous consumption, self-gratifying acts of improvement, of wit and dandyism.

Mary Crawford:

Independently wealthy, having an income of £20,000, Mary Crawford possesses a "true London maxim, that everything is to be got for money." Her materialistic outlook comes into close conflict with Edmund's determination to be a clergyman. Unable to divert him into another choice of profession, "she would henceforth admit his attentions without any idea beyond immediate amusement." Her attitude softens later in the novel when she realises that with Tom's illness, there is a stronger possibility that Edmund will inherit the Mansfield estates. Mary wishes to control when she refers to Henry Crawford's falling in love with Fanny as "the glory of fixing one who has been shot at by so many" An important part of her role in the novel is as a temptress, to get others to indulge in "forbidden" pleasures. For example, she tempts Edmund to participate in the theatricals (in which she is successful), and to give up his vocation to become a clergyman. Mary is the attractive antithesis of Fanny Price in various ways.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss how Austen delineates the characters in the novel?

Q 6: What are the various stages of Fanny's development in the novel?

8.6 AUSTEN'S NARRATIVE STYLE

Jane Austen uses third person omniscient narration to tell the story. The instances of 'telling' and 'showing' (these terms are borrowed from Waine C. Booth) are evident in the narrative. For example 'telling' is a chief mode of narration right from chapter I in the novel. In certain cases, however, 'showing' is also used by the narrator. The conversation between Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris in the first chapter, thus, exemplifies the mode of 'showing'. It is a common feature in the novels of Jane Austen that her women characters must marry. For this, they must meet men in socially permitted ways, at balls or during visits, where they must get to know one another through conversation. This is why, though Fanny is quite silent throughout the novel, conversation becomes a part of the narrative. Another important aspect is her use of long sentences in the novel. The sentences in the narrative are often long with various syntactical parts. Minute details of the characters and of the settings are expressed through a coherent narrative technique. The novelist does not experiment with varied styles or she does not have the element of 'play' throughout the narrative yet the narrative is striking in the novel. The reader may not be fascinated with the style of the narrative, yet the novelist is able to keep the reader moving along with the story through a plain narrative style.

Jane Austen is perhaps one of the first authors 'to grasp fully the technique of using free indirect discourse to represent the *lived* self in the moment'. Free indirect speech is a technique of using speech and narratorial discourse. It is employed in passages usually without quotation marks which are not delivered as direct speech but which

represent characters' expression by employing their vocabulary, phrases, sentence structure, and idiomatic inflections. Direct and indirect speech, subjectivity and objectivity merge, and the narrator, allowing distance from the character, mimics her style. When used for the central consciousness, the reader both identifies with this consciousness and suspects that it is not necessarily authoritative; what is delivered may be point of view rather than objective fact.



LET US KNOW

Three or Four Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on:

Jane Austen is quite different from her predecessors. For many years, she was not consciously writing for publication. During her period, Maria Edgeworth established herself as a very significant writer of the so-called 'provincial' novels. Her novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800) is particularly significant, both as a regional novel and as an evocation of history, 'before the year 1782'. But, her reputation did not last long as Jane Austen soon came to be regarded as the greatest woman writer of her time. What no authors before Jane Austen had attempted so successfully was to apply the techniques of the novel to the acute observation of society in microcosm: 'three of four families in a Country Village' was 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work,' she wrote in one of her letters. That her intentions were not small-scale, however, is clear from her next words – 'so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour'. Therefore, going against the trend of the novels of her time, Austen applies the microscope to human character and motivation, with no great didactic, moral, or satiric purpose, but with a gentle irony and perspicacity, which make her novels unique, as representations of universal patterns of behaviour, and as documentation of an aspect of the provincial society of her time. Jane Austen too criticises the 'gentry': the

characters in Mansfield Park stage an 'anarchic' play *Lover's Vows* incidentally written by Elizabeth Inchbald, and portrays an older order of values that is changing, at a time when the gap between the gentry and the poor is widening.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Briefly comment on the narrative style of Austen in the novel *Mansfield Park*?



8.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit has examined Jane Austen's classic novel *Mansfield Park* from various aspects. The plot of the novel deals with Thomas Bertram's family and his estate at Mansfield Park, and how Fanny Price, whom Thomas has brought to his home at the age of ten, grows and matures and how Sir Thomas's attitude to her undergoes a change after his return from Antigua. It is worth mentioning that Jane Austen's contribution to English literature is immense and she occupies a remarkable place in English fiction. Her vision may be limited, yet she develops themes of broad significance and presents very truthful versions of society and human beings. Critics have always commented on her ironic attitude to the polite society of England. This unit has dealt with the theme of love, matrimony, property, education etc. Taking these ideas, this unit has introduced you to Jane Austen and her novel *Mansfield Park*. Its context is colonialism, yet, matrimonial subjects are central to the design of the novel. Some critics do point out the absence of war experience in nearly all of her novels at a time when Napoleonic war was in force, but the way Austen focuses on the areas of society in the novel, it could be well read without reference to the war. The literary historian David Daiches says that Austen is the greatest of all the novelists of manners of any period. It was mainly because writing in the late 18th and early 19th century, Austen could very well reflect on the habits and manners of particular social classes operating in a developed social setup.



8.8 FURTHER READING

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Web Resource:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mansfield_Park



8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: She employs incidents of love and matrimony among the characters… … most of these affairs become unsuccessful because of the error in the attitudes of the characters… …Fanny's love for Edmund, however, is an exception in the novel… …through her character, Austen criticises the hollowness in the attitudes of the 'rich' people.

Ans to Q No 2: Education is important not necessarily as an academic exercise but as the adaptation of just values based on experience

and atmosphere… …because of education, the characters either acquire high social status due to their principled education or are doomed to suffer throughout due to their faulty education… …in the end of the novel, Sir Thomas realises the inadequacies of his faulty education of his children.

Ans to Q No 3: Yes… …in the novel Thomas Bertram leaves for Antigua in the West Indies for a year to resolve some unmentioned problem in plantations when his children have attained ages… …reference to the imperial attitudes of the British who frequently made colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America during that time… …Thomas Bertram's business in Antigua is a much discussed subject in the writings of Edward Said and other postcolonial writers.

Ans to Q No 4: It's a fictional technique adopted by Jane Austen… … mean an acute observation of society in microcosm… …in a letter, she wrote: 'three or four families in a Country Village' was 'the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work'… …to achieve this, she applied the microscope to human character and motivation… … this phrase hints at the miniature and insular world as her raw material.

Ans to Q No 5: Jane Austen creates various characters in the novel… …they fulfil the purpose of the novelist as they develop the story with their function and nature… … some of them have positive qualities: for example Fanny Price is a model of moral values… …while some other characters play other kinds of role having wickedness.

Ans to Q No 6: The first stage is Fanny's movement to Mansfield Park from Portsmouth… ... the second is during the return of Sir Thomas following his Antigua trip… …in the third stage, Fanny returns with William to her Portsmouth home… …the fourth stage is when she returns to Mansfield Park and is united with Edmund.

Ans to Q No 7: The narrative style is quite plain in *Mansfield Park*… …use of third person omniscient narrator to tell the story… …abundant use of techniques such as conversation, showing, telling, and various ornaments… …all these enhance the beauty of the novel as well as fulfil different purposes intended by the writer.



8.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Do you think that Austen's *Mansfield Park* serves as a mouthpiece of the women characters? Would you like to consider *Mansfield Park* as a feminist work?

Q 2: What is colonial in the novel *Mansfield Park*? How would you respond to the postcolonial criticism of *Mansfield Park* led mainly by Edward Said?

Q 3: How do you read Fanny's silence throughout the novel? Do you think that Fanny Price deserves the attention of the readers?

Q 4: Do you think that the novel is a replica of England's middle class society during Austen's time? Critically discuss.

Q 5: Thomas Bertram is considered to be representative of a repressive regime and the very metaphor of Mansfield Park denotes male authority. Discuss.

Q 6: In what ways, do you think, a novel like *Mansfield Park*, provide important access to the British colonial Endeavour? Discuss.

Q 7: Identify some of the ways in which Austen upholds the 18th-century attitude toward social ranks.

Q 8: Jane Austen likened her literary works to 'a little bit of ivory'. In light of this statement, explain how Austen structures the plot of *Mansfield Park*?

Q 9: What are the different kinds of marriages depicted in *Mansfield Park*? What kinds of qualities are important in choosing a marriage partner in this world? Explain.

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