# Novel And Realism

Novel is a literary genre with the narration of prose fiction in a lengthy form. It became more distinctive with Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe in the eighteenth century though we have evidence of literary work of similar patterns existing in various parts of the world earlier also.

Analysis of earlier novels has depicted 'Realism' as a particular characteristic that can differentiate it from earlier prose fiction. Realism can be understood as writing about the world as it is, without any polishing or romanticizing of events or people. This helps readers to estimate the time and space of a novel's plot through history.

Novels both critique as well as establish the dominant ideology. For example in Jane Austen's Emma distinction of social classes runs throughout the novel. An instance from chapter 2 :

It was an unsuitable connection and did not produce much happiness. (ch-2.4)

'Unsuitable' because the wife was rich and the husband poor, Mr. Weston’s first marriage becomes a cautionary tale about the need for social situations to be similar in order for love to actually exist.

A woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked, or because he is attached to her, and can write a tolerable letter. (ch-7.31) ~ Emma

Emma, a well-off young woman, has the ability to refuse offers of marriage. Other women (like Jane and Harriet) are not so lucky. Most of the marriages took place between people of the same class or status. But Emma befriends Harriet assuming her from a noble family and tries to pair her with Mr Elton. But the result of this opens her eyes. So here Mr Elton's refusal of Harriet for Emma establishes the idea of social class in the reader's mind but this also makes readers feel sympathetic for Harriet. This sympathy becomes the origin of argument against such a class system that discriminates people just because of the house in which they are born, a thing which no one can control. Marriage of Harriet smith to Robert Martin and finally of Emma to Mr Weston also works in the direction of promoting class structure of Highbury society.

Critiquing and reinforcing dominant ideology are both connected to each other. In order to criticise any problem or ideology, a writer needs to develop the context which in itself unknowingly works towards establishing that particular ideology in the reader's mind. Also, language plays a major role in keeping a balance between establishing ideology and critiquing it. This balance through language makes readers realize the subtlety of critique. For example in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, author does not describe the act of rape and it makes readers suspicious of his intention. In the novel hard times the cold introduction of Bitzer:

'Rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes; His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white' (Chapter 2, page 4)

before bringing the factual definition of a horse is enough for readers to interpret the negativity

of his character. These characteristics of Bitzer are provided by the author to criticize Gradrind's factual world but these characteristics also help in the development of the same factual world in the novel. Also the contrast between two students of same class i.e. Bitzer and sisy brings out the argument of fact vs fancy. While bitzer represents Gradrind's school with rote learning where fancy and imagination has no space in acquiring knowledge, sissy's character presents emotions and feeling as very much part of learning.

This novel satirizes the two popular schools of thought i.e. the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham which claims that human nature is mostly motivated by self-interest and it is duty of the government that with the help of education and franchise to promote and sustain the individual’s own interest. On the other hand we see that political economy believes prosperity of nation dependent on constant economical laws and according to these economical laws individual’s self-interest in an employment can promote his general welfare.

Jane Austen's Emma also reinforces the conditions of women in the 19th century. Though Emma due to her social and financial position has much control over her life, she is still not out of feminist discourse. She tries to manipulate others by matchmaking but she herself was being manipulated by Mr Knightley from the beginning. In their first meeting in the novel, he says of Emma:

'But she knows how much the marriage is to Miss Taylor’s advantage ; how very acceptable it must be at Miss Taylor’s time of life to be settled in a house of her own' (Ch-12).

Here Mr Knightley's use of 'she' instead of you even in her presence shows how he trivializes her presence, how he acts as her mentor. She is not even allowed to make her own judgement. This subjugation through language demonstrates underlying patriarchal control. Later in the novel, their marriage makes readers cringe because of the age gap. It becomes a reason for readers to critique his manipulative patriarchal control.

The novel Hard Times is a critique of utilitarianism. The plot of this novel is designed in such a way that reinforcing the ideology leads to such severe results that it becomes a critique of utilitarianism. Characters like Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby acts as father figures making everything hard factual and eliminating space for imagination. Other characters suffer in this and some like Louisa and Cecelia jupe emerges through suffering making Gradgrind realize his mistakes and readers to realize that how lack of moral attributes like sympathy, generosity and altruism can destroy human relationships.

Also, the contrast between industrialization and union is an interesting one. Industrialization has been critiqued throughout the novel by making references to things like black bricks which could have been red and condition of workers & many more things. But at the same time, the author has also villanized union by showing its politics. By showing the bad side of the union he also promotes capitalism. So, here also critique as well as reinforcement of ideology is going hand in hand.

## Works Cited


1. Emma by Jane Austen
2. Hard times by Charles Dickens