

প্রস্তুতিত নাবী

ড° ইচমিবেখা সন্দিকৈ

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সম্পাদনা

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# Austen's Construction of the Feminine Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century England : A Reading of Mansfield Park

Parineeta Dihingia

**Abstract:** Notable for the economic growth and industrialization, the nineteenth century in England, the period between 1801 and 1900, brought a huge transformation in the society. However, the women of this period did not enjoy much privilege and freedom as their male counterparts. They were given little opportunities for education and work. Born in the eighteenth century into an upper middle class family, Jane Austen is popularly known for her outstanding novels, all of which were published in the early nineteenth century. Writing from a narrow framework, Austen mostly portrayed the social milieu and the middle class domesticity of the nineteenth century. Her novel *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814 is also a portrayal of the middle-class domestic life and family, something she experienced closely. However, the distinguished feature of most of her novels is the portrayal of female protagonist distinguished from other female characters in terms of their maturity, ideas and also in their construction of an independent space. This paper,

thus is an attempt to read *Mansfield Park* in the light of the feminine space constructed through the central character, Fanny Price.

**Keywords :** Women, nineteenth century, English society, Jane Austen, feminine space.

**Introduction :** The nineteenth century in England is an important era in terms of the rapid growth of economy and urbanization thereby leading the English society towards development and an improved lifestyle. However, the growth of industries and capitalist agriculture led to a number of changes in the society especially in terms of the employment of women. With the introduction of machines, there was a breaking away of a large numbers of rural industries locally run by country women at home leading them to work at fields. Some poor women, in order to balance their livelihood also started to work in big factories. These economic advances on the part of the working class women were a matter of envy for the women of higher circles. The increasing economic growth of the upper and middle classes ultimately led to a new trend of employing governesses to teach the young ladies of at home. As Trevelyan remarks,

“The upper-class woman was being devitalized and cut off from life and its interests, as a result of the increasing wealth of her men folk and the more artificial conditions of modern life. In the old self-supplying manor-house, with its innumerable jobs to be done within and without doors, the ladies of good family, like Pastons and Verneys, had their allotted tasks. But now it became the hall-mark of a “lady” to be idle”. (Trevelyan 493)

This picture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English society was very brilliantly portrayed by Jane