

## Cooperation as an Approach of Ecofeminism in Jane Austen's *Emma*: A Critical Study

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**Abstract:** *Ecofeminism is a new concept in literature which implies the relationship of nature and women and it studies how women are very much friendly to ecology than that of men. The feministic study focuses that the female are less pollutants than that of their male counterparts. This paper deals with ecofeminism in Jane Austen's Emma, a novel on man-woman relationship. It has been analyzed that women always cooperate with men for a better and peaceful society.*

**Keywords:** Jan Austen, Emma, Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a newly introduced term. It is also closely related with literature. In ecofeminism nature is emphasized as a part of life. Woman is compared with nature or the woman is nature itself. In order to exist peacefully and healthy we must protect and preserve nature. So as woman is a part of nature she should be saved and preserved. The women who are part of the nature are submissive and go side by side with man. Bandana Shiva, one of the greatest ecofeminists of our time says, "Woman must be the lover of peace and should have the courage to go side by side with the men" (24). Ecofeminism the concept has already been defined in literature. Its scope is wide but our point of discussion is that Nature and woman are very similar to each other, so the society especially male folk should co-operate with their female counter part in order to live peacefully of vice-versa. When man does not co-operate with woman or vice versa there is the disorder in the society.

Examples are there that when Eve and Adam work separately, problem aroused. Satan could get the chance to misguide Eve when worked separately in the Eden Garden. Ravan abducted Sita when Rama or Laskhaman were not within their hut in the Panchabati forest. So ecofeminism opines that man -women's co-operation is a must for a lovable and peaceful society.

In this paper we will analyse how Jane Austen emphasizes the man- woman's co-operation for a healthy and wealth society which she has analysed in her novel, *Emma*. All the heroines of Austen are very co-operative. Critics' like J.W. Beach and Mary Lascelles say that the heroines of Austen are taught how to share the rich and handsome young people in love and after that they could get them married. Mary Daly' says that women should resist the atrocity of the man in a non-violent way which is the best remedy for co-operation between man and woman. In the fictions of Jane Austen, we find

a stable co-operation between the male and female characters as a result there is not any conflict between man and woman. Though there are difference between the heroes and heroines of Austen, the heroines co-operate with the male characters though she resists and opposes the atrocities of the heroes. For example in *Emma* all the women characters including Emma are very docile, submissive and co-operative they never rage voice again their male relatives and try to co-operate and adjust with them.

F.R. Leavis emphasizes Jane Austen intense moral preoccupation. She is a moral-bent of lady who is always co-operative, sensitive and friendly to everybody. The novel *Emma* is confined within four families and in three villages. But it is noticed that co-operation and face to face relationship is the basic philosophy of the main characters. F.R. Leavis notices such morality of co-operation lies among all the characters. Leavis says "when we examine the formal perfection of Emma, we find that it can be appreciated only in terms of co-operation , moral pre-occupation that characterize the novels peculiar interest in life"(135). Another critic Graham Hugh argues that the co-operation of Emma with other characters in the novel consist of within limited matters. Though Emma is co-operative, her co-operation is confined within a limited social sphere. Hugh says Emma is co-operative but she is not above her selfish interest. The judgement of Leavis is more appreciated than Graham Hugh because Emma's cordial relationship with the members of our family and neighbours is always above the selfish interest because she was always engaged her for husband hunting for her friends and relatives. Her experience is not enough to study the society and the complex young people. That is why Emma commits mistake after mistake even rejecting the opinion of Mr. Knightley. She is a young lady of 21 years old. Her mind is not that much matured to

judge the complexity and judging the main folk properly she perceives many things positively about them. When Emma is confronted with reality she is disillusioned and keeps away from her own discussion. Here the prospective of eco-feminism comes that Emma doesn't go against the characters that she finds opposite what she thought. She doesn't back-bit about these characters when she discusses about them with her friends.

Jane Austen portrays Emma in the theory of eco-feminism was not a formal concept in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the concept was in air by that time which the great writer like Austen could understand how the woman should maintain herself in the society with her men counterpart. Emma is sketched in eco-feministic perspective because she is very much co-operative, docile and submissive. She doesn't believe in the language of violence on like the radical feminist who ways war against the main folk and to snatch their rights from them.

The eco-feminist believes that woman and nature can survive for the betterment of the men only by the co-operation not by war or violence. The eco-feminist treats woman as a major part of nature because like nature woman procreates for which the generation continues to run. So everybody should come forward to protect nature and woman for a healthy and wealthy society. This is philosophy of the writer which she infuses in her writing.

When we analyse co-operation as one of the main elements of eco-feminism we confront with the female characters of Jane Austen with the rest of other. This has been already analysed partly. Sketching the full portrait of Emma one finds how she is co-operative and submissive from the beginning of her life. In the childhood she was in the care of Miss Taylor. Miss Taylor was her caretaker because Emma's mother died when she was baby .Family co-operation was the basic culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England. So Emma learns from family how to co-operate the maid like Miss Taylor. Miss Taylor was the friend, philosopher and guide to Emma. Both of them are good friend who share everything heartily. It is very difficult to the outsider to judge whether Emma and Miss Taylor got married she lost one of her trusted friend. Emma and Miss Taylor relationship could be termed from the eco-feminist perspective when there are differences between Miss Taylor and Miss Taylor over certain matters like food, tiffin and dress. They never tussle among themselves rather the minor differences are solved in the mutual understanding for which their co-operation become strengthens. From such co-operation they were united heartily. Miss Taylor was so much co-operative to Emma and her father they couldn't forget Taylor even after her marriage. The absence of Miss Taylor in the house was handed over on Emma's mind for a long time. She

doesn't adjust herself in the absence of her trusted friend.

Another eco-feministic perspective of Emma's character is that she is liked by everybody though commits mistake after mistake judging the mentality of the other characters. Mr. Knightley who is the elder brother of Emma's brother-in-law always disputes with her regarding her misguidance. Mr. Knightley is the only character of the novel Emma who could challenge her by refuting her opinion and views regarding others. In the first chapter Emma claims that it is he who brings about the matrimonial aligns between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston. When she claims so Mr. Knightley opposes her saying that Emma could guess luckily about their match. But in true sense of tem both Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston were attracted for each other and Miss Taylor is very clever who could judge perfectly that Mr. Weston is her right choice. He is socially and economically suitable to Miss Taylor. Here both Miss Taylor and Emma are very much co-operative with both the society and with the male partner with whom they will spent their rest of life. Miss Taylor discussion of choosing Mr. Weston as her life partner is very realistic. In this way Austen's analysis bringing about a match through Emma could be perfectly analyzed from the eco-perspective point of view. Again the argument between Emma and Mr. Knightly regarding this match making between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston is also eco-feministic in flavour. Though they enter into a hot argument which lands Emma in controversy yet she is very much friendly with Mr. Knightley. She doesn't develop any kind of ill will against him rather she listens him carefully and rejects his opinion and judgement. Emma is very much confident that it is she who is the master architect of the match making between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor. When Mr Knightley criticizes her Emma says, "Mr Knightley loves to find fault with me in a joke. We always say what we like to one another."(80) This dialogue of Emma gives a lot of eco-feministic sense of her relationship with Mr. Knightley's criticism of her is prompted by friendly motives and not by any dislike. Another point to notice here is that, far from heeding Mr. Knightley's criticism Emma declares her intention to make one more match. She says that she must look for a wife for the visor, Mr. Elton. She is a high opinion about Mr. Elton and thinks that he should now get married. In this connection she says, "There is no body in Highbury who deserves him; and he has been here a whole year, and has fitted of his house comfortably that it would be a shame to have him single any longer."(85) From this dialogue Emma's mind is revealed who acts as a beneficial and helpful to others ad her neighbours. She takes pain for the match making of Mr. Elton. She thinks about Mr. Elton and realizes his problem who should marry soon. Emma thinks for others though with and intention of taking credit arranging such

suitable match making. She takes pain to help others whatever her intention may be we find sincerity in her effort arranging the match for others.

Emma's co-operation to Mr. Elton and Miss Harriet Smith is very spontaneous. She comes forward to bring a match between the vicar and Harriet Smith without knowing their intention. Mr. Elton is also very much co-operative and submissive when he deals with the ladies in Highbury including Emma. This is not her first illusion which ruptures by the denial Mr. Elton to wed to Miss Harriet. He rejected Harriet which ruptures by the denial Mr. Elton to wed to Miss Harriet. He rejected Harriet as her parentage is unknown which means she is illegitimate child. Miss Harriet Smith is in love with Mr. Robert Martin but Emma rejects such proposals because Robert was a mere farmer.

Jane Austen sketches the character Emma making her over confident because she thinks herself superior, judicious and above others due to getting co-operation, affection and good treatment from others. Such co-habitation with co-operation is the main philosophy of eco-feminism. Though various types of people having different socio-cultural hierarchy among them, they live a life of peace, prosperity due to co-operation. Cazamian says, "Jane Austen deals with the restricted circle of home life, and round it all social interests are gathered. The atmosphere is one of provincial calms with a very limited outlook where the extremes of wealth and poverty are unknown. We find ourselves in a small world of country, gentry, clergyman, and middle class people, where social intercourse is smooth and simple."(225) The

famous historian of English literature Cazamian has analyzed it from social point view which is found in a village named Highbury. He analyses how the small village comprising various types and kinds of people having different status live with co-operation which is the basic idea eco-feminism. Cazamian has not mentioned the war eco-feminism while analyzing the co-operative attitude of all the characters of Highbury rather he finds out such a circumstance and socio-cultural environment which is equal to the eco-feministic circumstance of Highbury. Again Cazamian says, "Each of her novels depicts a group of human beings, their relation with one another, their co-operation and affinities, their mutual influence, their mutual conversation."(History of English Literature, 126)

Austen's *Emma* contains a wealth of character studies which is based on co-operation and fellow feeling. These character studies are not equally good. Her studies of woman are more searching and more lifelike than those of men. She has delineated character from the inside with the full and finished touch of the great masters; and she can also sketch figures with so serene and suggestive a pen that they stand out on a strong and unforgettable ground. Austen's power of perception is keen and fresh. She immediately grasps the individuals' traits the odd as well as the comic. Her work represents in an original way as nature grows and shines which is the internal comedy of life with all its whims and fancies. Reality awakens in her a spirit of amusement without bitterness. Her grasp of character doesn't destroy the concert senses of faces, gestures and acts. She abundantly possesses the implicit eloquence of humour which helps for co-operation and integration.

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