

ELEMENTS OF FEMINISM IN “SENSE AND SENSIBILITY” BY JANE AUSTEN

Khaydarova Dilbar

PhD student at Bukhara State University

d.i.xaydarova@buxdu.uz

Feminism has a broad meaning which advocates for women empowerment and gender equality. It emphasizes establishing equal rights, opportunities for women in all spheres including politics, education and economy. The main aim is to empower women to make independent choices in education, social and personal life.

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Jane Austen is well-known for her strong female characters in her novels. All of her six novels have one thing in common: Austen chose female characters as central characters and this was a big step to inspire women to speak up, find their position in the society and to be heard.

We aim to analyze the elements of feminism in one of Jane Austen's successful novels “Sense and Sensibility”. Though it was written before feminist movements appeared in literature, there are some distinct elements of feminism in the novel.

The novel starts with financial struggles The Dashwood sisters face after their father's death and this shows how women were financially dependent on men. In the 19th century inheritance laws were in the favor of male heirs and this was criticized by Jane Austen.

The next element of feminism can be observed in the portrayal of one of the main figures, Elinor Dashwood. “Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence.”¹ Austen depicts her as an intelligent lady who can manage financial matters at that tough period. Though women had no right for formal education at that time, Austen assured her readers that self-improvement and the knowledge of art is crucial. Marianne Dashwood's knowledge of literature and her interest to music indicated the importance of women's intellectual growth.

One of the strongest elements of feminism can be seen in the bond between sisters which shows how crucial it is to stand for each other support women. Despite their differences, Elinor and Marianne support each other through their journey of self-discovery. They do not criticize each

¹ Austen, Jane. Project Gutenberg. 2008. -P3

other for their emotional struggles, instead, they overcome both emotional and financial challenges together with solidarity.

Elinor Dashwood can be considered as a feminist figure because of her emotional intelligence and independence. She lived at the time when marriage was seen as a way to be financially secured, she prioritizes self-growth over marriage. She takes financial responsibilities of the family after her father's death, makes rational decisions and gives advice to her mother and sisters. Through this female character, Austen wants to prove that women are also capable of making their own choices.

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