

Topic - Joseph Andrew as a Social Satire

- ⇒ Henry Fielding is widely studied today as one of the chief begetters of the Modernist Movement in novel, and as a Master who embodied in realistic prose a panoramic Survey of the contemporary society.
- ⇒ Fielding's brilliant Joseph Andrew is an outstanding encapsulation of the 18th Century English social life and Manners. It mirrors with new force and realism the blemishes of mankind in its true face.
- ⇒ The novel Joseph Andrew is a social Satire, a genre that seeks to expose the shortcomings and mistakes in society with the hope of effecting change.
- ⇒ The novel in its entirety, is an impassioned Satire on the Moral and social ills that beset the 18th Century English society. In this novel we are confronted with a chameleonic society that frequently changes its appearance to gratify personal lusts of various kinds.
- ⇒ Here Fielding essentially becomes a spokesman of his age and seeks to come out strongly against the affected behaviour of the so called respectable society of the day.
- ⇒ The reader becomes a witness of characters who have a life of their own, but it is the essence of humanity, distilled through Fielding's own vision. It is presented to us through the lines;

"I describe not men, but Manners, not an individual, but species."

- ⇒ Fielding's explanation begins with his survey on the nature and temperament of women of his time. Women of all classes were snobbish and amorous to some extent.
- ⇒ The sensuality of women is reflected at its best through the representatives like Lady Booby, Mrs. Slipslop and Betty. Lady Booby feels greatly attracted by Joseph's manliness and personality and seeks in vain to evoke his sexual response to gratify her sensual appetite.
- ⇒ Mrs. Slipslop also follows her mistress's path and tries to win Joseph as a lover. Even Betty falls in love with Joseph and seeks in vain to have sexual gratification from him. All these amorous intentions show a fair picture of the amorous side of the 18th century women.
- ⇒ The society that Fielding portrays in Joseph Andrews is extremely inhuman, callous, indifferent, uncharitable, and narcissistic. The insensitive hardness of this society is clearly exposed in the stage-coach scene in which we find inhuman stubbornness through the character of postillion and the coachman.
- ⇒ Thus both the coachman and the lady decide to leave Joseph to his own lot, the coachman because he is behind schedule, and the lady because she cannot tolerate the idea of aiding a naked man. The incident gives ample scope to Fielding for satirizing the pretences and affectations of an essentially inhuman society.
- ⇒ Fielding also provides some glimpses of the chaotic, greedy, opportunistic and insincere sides of the 18th century society. The chaotic side is exposed by the robbery incident. It is also revealed by the incident in which a villain attempts to rape Fanny. Human greed is exposed by the characters of Surgeons and the clergyman.

⇒ The Surgeon refused to treat Joseph because, was unable to pay fees. The clergymen of the time were the most selfish and Materialistic. Parson Barnabas and Parson Trulliber are the true embodiments of Corrupt Clergy.

⇒ Then there is a Squire his lustful desire for Fanny taking advantages of her poor Condition. The insincerity of the society is also revealed by the depiction of the justices, who were as dishonest as the clergymen and the squires.

⇒ Justice Foulk, for instance, goes out of his way to send Joseph and Fanny to prison, without any trial, only to satisfy a whim of Lady Booby.

⇒ In brief, Joseph Andrews is a fine social document that represents an inclusive picture of the 18th Century English Society. The novel directs its satire not only against particular individuals, but also against the follies and vices of the entire society.