

Minutes / Proceedings of the One-Day National Seminar
“Jane Austen @ 250: Relevance, Readings and Reimaginings”

INAUGURAL SESSION

Date: Tuesday, 16th December 2025

Venue: Library Auditorium, Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad

Rapporteur: Dr. S M Fasiullah

The one-day national seminar titled “Jane Austen @ 250: Relevance, Readings and Reimaginings” was held at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. The seminar was organized by the School of Languages, Linguistics and Indology (SLL&I) in collaboration with the Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), the Department of English, and the Cultural Activity Centre.

The inaugural session commenced with a welcome address by Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb, Dean, SLL&I, who outlined the objectives of the seminar. She emphasized the importance of revisiting Jane Austen’s works through contemporary critical perspectives and highlighted the relevance of Austen’s writings in understanding society, morality, and literary traditions. She informed that the seminar would feature technical sessions, paper presentations, readings, retellings, and discussions, focusing on themes such as society, morality, gender, adaptation, and transcultural reinterpretations of Jane Austen’s works. A Round-Table Discussion on Jane Austen would also be conducted, in which eminent scholars—Prof. E. Nageswara Rao, Prof. Parimala Kulkarni, Prof. C. R. Visweswara Rao, Prof. Mohan G. Ramanan, Dr. Shilpaa Anand, Dr. Siddharth Satpathy, Dr. Asma Rasheed, Prof. Panchanan Mohanty, and Prof. Shugufta Shaheen were to participate.

Introducing the Chief Guest and outlining the academic vision of MANUU, Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan, Director, CDOE, highlighted the University’s commitment to promoting interdisciplinary dialogue and fostering global literary engagement.

Prof. Sk. Ishtiaque Ahmed, Registrar, MANUU, remarked that Jane Austen’s novels continue to inspire new readings and interpretations across cultures and generations, underscoring her continued relevance in contemporary times.

The Inaugural Address was delivered by Mr. Gareth Wynn Owen, British Deputy High Commissioner for Telangana & Andhra Pradesh. He observed that Jane Austen was far ahead of her time, not only as a novelist but also as a woman writer. He noted that Austen employed wit and subtle social critique to interrogate societal roles and expectations, creating characters that are rich, diverse, and psychologically nuanced. He further remarked that Austen’s works appeal equally to young readers and mature audiences, thereby ensuring their accessibility and enduring relevance.

In his Presidential Remarks, Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan, Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor, MANUU, stated that Jane Austen has left an enduring literary legacy through the values she explored and the memorable

characters she created. Describing her works as timeless, he referred to *Pride and Prejudice* as a zenith of Romantic fiction that combines emotional depth with sharp social criticism. He also observed that Austen initiated critical engagement with society much earlier than many formal English critics and noted that Indian literary, academic, and theatrical traditions—particularly during the 1990s—drew significantly from British literary heritage.

During the inaugural session, Dr. Meraj Ahmed, Cultural Coordinator, Cultural Activity Club, felicitated the Chief Guest with a memento. Dr. Rama Rao, former Director, IMC, presented a hand-drawn painting of Jane Austen, created by him, to Mr. Gareth Wynn Owen.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Prof. Kottacheruvu Nagendra, Head, Department of English, MANUU. He expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, speakers, organizers and participants, marking the successful completion of a scholarly and meaningful tribute to Jane Austen's lasting influence on world literature. The session was compered by research scholar Ms. Rahat Afroz.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Moderator: Mr. Ashraful Haque

Rapporteur: Sheeryn Khan

Venue: Conference Hall, SLL&I

Discussants: Prof. E. Nageswara Rao, Prof. C. R. Visweswara Rao, Prof. Mohan G. Ramanan, Prof. Parimala Kulkarni, Dr. Shilpaa Anand, Dr. Siddharth Satpathy, Dr. Asma Rasheed, Prof. Shugufta Shaheen

The round table was one of the best features of the conference "Jane Austen @250: Relevance, Readings, and Reimaginings." It gave researchers a chance to have an open, thoughtful discussion on how Austen's work continues to have an impact. With the help of moderator Ashraful Haque, the event went beyond traditional literary analysis to look at how Austen's works continue to inspire new interpretations in a wide range of theoretical and cultural settings. It showed how rich Austen's narrative worlds have been and how her works still speak to modern readers in unexpected ways.

Ashraful Haque started the discussion by welcoming everyone and introducing the key speakers. First, he asked Prof. E. Nageswara Rao, a retired professor from Osmania University, to speak. His comments set the stage for the conversation in a very interesting way. Prof. Rao said that even if Jane Austen had simply written *Pride and Prejudice*, it would have been enough to make her a great writer. Prof. Rao looked at how people often get Mr. Darcy's character wrong and highlighted how all of Austen's main characters have universal human traits. He ended by saying that Austen's work changed the English novel in a big way, defining its style and tone for many years to come. The conversation then turned to the thoughts of Prof. C. R. Visweswara Rao, who used to teach at Vikramasimhapuri University. He put Austen in the context of the Georgian era's larger cultural and intellectual framework. His research emphasised the feminist themes present in Austen's works, especially the limitations imposed on women by societal expectations and patriarchal standards. He made detailed comments about how

Austen's stories deal with gender, morality, and finding personal freedom in restrictive situations, which shows that her work is still important in modern criticism.

After Prof. Rao, Prof. Mohan G. Ramanan from university of Hyderabad, highlighted how Austen was aware of and influenced by Richardson's use of letters as narrative form but she did not simply imitate it instead, Austen internalized the epistolary mode, transforming the psychological depth and moral introspection of letter writing in to a more advanced narrative strategy. And the next talk of Prof. Parimala Kulkarni from Osmania University, argued that Austen remains relevant not because of nostalgia or romantic plots alone but due to her sharp critique of social structures. Then she emphasized that questioning Austen's relevance is itself productive, as it opens up debated about canon formation, pedagogy and cross-cultural literary studies. Both of their study highlighted Austen's technical sophistication, her subtle engagement with history and the enduring relevance of her social vision.

After the two academics talked, the next speaker, Dr. Shilpaa Anand from BITS Pilani, Hyderabad, gave a unique and thought-provoking speech by looking at Jane Austen's books through the lens of literary and cultural disability studies. Dr. Shilpaa started by asking if Jane Austen's work is still relevant now. She said that her fiction is still important when read again in terms of disability, normalcy, and being able-bodied. She pointed out that Austen's characters often do what she called "ableist masking," which is similar to what people with autism talk about. In the end, she said that reading Austen again through the lens of disability studies brings to light hidden chronic illnesses and shows how women have been left out of medical care throughout history. Dr. Siddharth Satpathy from the University of Hyderabad gave a speech that was both interesting and thought-provoking. His speech was about looking at Jane Austen's writings again from critical and contextual points of view, showing how they are still important today and in the past. Dr. Satpathy's presentation looked at how Jane Austen's books create complicated social worlds that question class hierarchies, moral values, and the ability to move up in society. He stressed how important it is to put Austen's works in their social and historical context, but he also recognised that they may be read in new ways using modern critical frameworks. His talk focused on how Austen's sophisticated narrative techniques and ironic tone were important tools for making societal criticism. Dr. Satpathy also talked about how Jane Austen's work continues to inspire fresh readings and adaptations in many other cultures and fields. The speech was interesting and well-received by those present.

Dr. Asma Rasheed from the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) was the next speaker. Her speech was about how Jane Austen's books are still important now and how they may be read and reinterpreted in new ways. Dr. Rasheed talked on how Jane Austen's novels deal with issues of society, morality, gender relations, and human choice in her speech. She pointed out how Austen showed societal institutions and home life in a complex way. Dr. Rasheed also talked about how important it is to read Austen in ways other than the usual romantic ones. She encouraged people to think critically about themes like power, class, and moral judgement. Her speech was deep, clear, and focused on teaching. The audience liked the session, and it added a lot to the larger conversations at the event. The last speaker of the event was Prof. Shugufta Shaheen, who gave a thought-provoking talk about how men and women read Jane Austen's books differently. In her discussion, Professor Shaheen talked about how Austen's writings have been seen as feminine in culture, which has kept men from reading them in the past. She used *Pride and Prejudice* to show how Elizabeth Bennet is the one who changes Darcy's

feelings and morals. She also talked about how Austen's masculine characters started to show "softer" masculinity.

Finally, the event ended with an interesting interaction with the audience, during which research scholars shared their thoughts, and brought new points of view to the conversation. Their contributions enhanced the discourse and underscored the enduring significance of Jane Austen in modern research. This brought the round-table session to a meaningful end, which was a suitable end to a rich and thought-provoking discussion.

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

Session 1: Society, Morality, and the Social World

Time: 2:30 PM – 3:20 PM

Chair Persons: Dr. Shah Alam & Dr. S. M. Fasiullah

Moderator cum Rapporteur: Abul Hasnat

Mode: Online

This Session focused on exploring the themes of society, morality, and social structures in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The session began under the able guidance of the chairpersons, Dr. Shah Alam and Dr. S. M. Fasiullah, who briefly introduced the theme of the session and the relevance of Austen's work in understanding social dynamics.

The first paper was presented by Durafshaan Habeeb from Avanthi Degree and PG College, Hyderabad. Her paper titled "*Sibling Dynamics and Family Politics in Shaping Relationships: A Study of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*" offered insightful observations on family relationships, sibling bonds, and the role of domestic politics in shaping social and emotional outcomes in the novel.

The second presentation was delivered by Sadaf Saifulgani Mandlik from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad. Her paper, "*Understanding Pride: A Moral and Virtue Perspective on Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*," examined the concept of pride through a moral and ethical lens, highlighting Austen's nuanced portrayal of character development and virtue.

The third presenter, Sandeep Agrahari from CMP Degree College, University of Allahabad, who was scheduled to present a paper titled "*Domestic Boundaries: Class, Gender, and the Economic Constraints of Regency England in Jane Austen's Antifeminist Lens*," was absent, and hence the paper could not be presented.

The final paper was presented by Masarrat Zareen from MANUU, Hyderabad. Her presentation, "*The Narrative Apparatus and Construction of Social Microcosm in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*," focused on Austen's narrative techniques and how they construct a detailed social microcosm reflective of Regency England.

The session concluded with brief comments from Dr. S M Fasiullah, who appreciated the presenters for their scholarly engagement and emphasized the continuing relevance of *Pride and Prejudice* in discussions of society, morality, and social order.

Session 2: Gender, Adaptation And Transcultural Reimaginings

Time: 3:25 PM – 4:25 PM

Chair Persons: Dr. Khairunnisa Nakathorige & Dr. Qudsi Rizvi

Moderators cum Rapporteurs: Abul Hasnat, Farhana and Harikrishnan O (Research Scholars Dept. of English)

The paper presentation session was conducted as part of the one-day national seminar titled “*Jane Austen @250: Relevance, Readings and Reimaginings*.” Session 4, titled “*Gender, Adaptation and Transcultural Reimagining*,” took place in the afternoon from 3:25 PM to 4:25 PM via Google Meet. It was jointly chaired by Dr Khairunnisa Nakathoriga and Dr Qudsi Rizvi, whose guidance ensured the session's effective conduct. A total of five papers were scheduled for presentation in this session, of which four were presented, while one combined paper could not be presented due to the absence of the presenters. The presented papers included Vidushi Rai from Amity University, who delivered a paper titled “*Dressed in Sorrow: Fashion, Memory, and Unspoken Wounds of Women Navigating Love in Austen’s Fiction*,” examining the symbolic role of fashion and emotional memory in women’s experiences. The second presenter Dr. Kahkashan Latif from Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, who presented “*Influence of French on Jane Austen*,” highlighting French cultural and literary influences on Austen’s works. Next paper was presented by Sameena Kauser from MANUU, Hyderabad, who discussed “*Female Agency, Social Constraint, and Marriage in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice*,” focusing on women’s negotiation of autonomy within social norms. The last presenter was Ashraful Haque from MANUU, Hyderabad, who presented “*The Moral Development of Austen’s Motherless Heroines as a Case Study in Feminist Pedagogy and Developmental Psychology*,” offering an interdisciplinary feminist and psychological reading of Austen’s heroines. The combined paper that could not be presented was authored by Mudasir Ahmad Mir from Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University and Dr Tawseef Majid Mir from CVR College of Engineering, Hyderabad, titled “*The Female Gaze: Matrimonial Markets and Monetary Manoeuvres in Pride and Prejudice*.” At the conclusion of the presentations, the session chairs offered detailed comments on each paper and initiated discussions that critically engaged with the themes, methodologies, and arguments presented, which enriched the scholarly exchange. Despite the absence of one presentation, the session was intellectually stimulating and successfully contributed to the seminar’s broader objective of examining gendered, adaptive, and transcultural interpretations of Jane Austen’s works.

Session 3: Reading and Retellings

Time: 4:30 PM – 5:00 PM

Chair Persons: Dr. Faizan Ahmad & Mr. Firdous Nazir

Moderator cum Rapporteur: Sheeryn Khan (Research Scholar, Dept. of English)

The “*Readings & Retellings*” was the final session of the conference. The session convened essential discussions on Jane Austen’s works, emphasising interpretative analyses and contemporary reinterpretations that reinforced Austen’s enduring significance in current literary discourse. The sessions occurred on Google Meet and utilised the entire 30-minute duration, facilitating concentrated academic discourse. Dr. Faizan Ahmad and Mr. Firdous Nazir chaired the session with academic diligence, and provided insightful commentary that connected Austen’s literary methods to modern discussions on adaptation and gender discourse.

The session included two presentations due to the absence of one scheduled speaker. Sanjana From Technological University commenced the session with an interesting reading of chosen excerpts from *Persuasion* and *Pride and Prejudice*, offering close textual insights into Austen’s narrative style. Ashraful Haque from Maulana Azad National Urdu University Hyderabad subsequently presented an original sequel entitled *The Secret Design of William Darcy: A sequel to Pride and Prejudice*, which examined contemporary reinterpretations of Darcy’s character while examining issues of gender roles and adaptability. Two scheduled readings by Sohail Ahmad Khan (MANUU Off-Campus), entitled Reading Select Passages from *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Formation of a Heart: A Sequel to Pride and Prejudice* were cancelled owing to his absence. The discussion ended with an overview of essential ideas highlighting the scholarly significance of literary re-imaginings. Sheeryn Khan, a research scholar at the department of English acted as the moderator and rapporteur, overseeing the conversation and recording the proceedings. This session formally and successfully concluded the conference.