

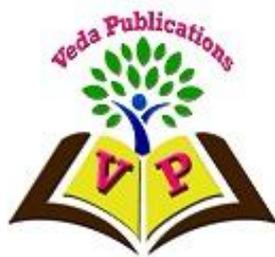


## A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION AND MADAME BOVARY BY GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

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### ABSTRACT



Gustave Flaubert was one of the eminent French writers. Each of his novels deals with the reality of today's life. In present scenario people are very passionate and ambitious towards their dreams, wants and life. This passion people, the urge of fulfillment of their dreams and desires sometimes destroy their entire life. In *Madame Bovary*, in order to fulfill the unlimited desires and wishes Emma destroys her life. In the same way in *Sentimental Education*, Frederic wants to become a millionaire and for that he could do anything. The main theme of the novel is the frustration of middle – class life. Thus in all the writings of Flaubert we can see the grim reality of day to day life.

**Keywords:** *Passionate, Ambitious, Desires, Scenario, Millionaire, Reality.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Gustave Flaubert was one of the most influential writers of the modern fiction. He was born in December 12, 1821 in Rouen, France. His father was a physician and his mother was a kind hearted lady with religious views. Since childhood, Flaubert was very close to his mother. He started writing at the age of fourteen. In 1844, he became the victim of serious nervous illness, which was probably related to epilepsy. Due to his bad health, he quietly lived at

Le Croisset and devoted himself to the writings. Flaubert died in 1880.

His writings cover a wide range of morbidity and pessimism, which may have been due to his bad health and unfulfilled dreams. Flaubert was often unhappy and bitter because of the realities of the life and unattainable fancies. His loneliness and unhappiness is best expressed in *Madame bovary*. Flaubert was one of the most important writers of the 19 century who took the French novel to new heights of success.



His notable works are *Madame Bovary*, *Salamambo*, *Sentimental Education*, *The Temptation of St. Antony*, *Three Tales*, *The Legend of St. Julian*, *The Hospitalier* and *the Herodias*.

### A THEMATIC STUDY OF HIS NOVEL

In *Sentimental Education*, Flaubert presents a young man who lacks the will or insight to build his own identity. The main theme of this novel is search of love, a search that seems very important for the survival and happiness. Frederic's search of Madam Arnoux is one of the main parts of the novel. Throughout his life, he searches his love. Over a period of thirty years he dreams of Madam Arnoux and waited to capture her attention. Very beautifully he describes her beauty when he saw her first time in the ship:

Her black tresses, twining around the edges of her large brows, descended very low, and seemed amorously to press the oval of her face. Her robe of light muslin spotted with green spread out in numerous folds and her straight nose, her chin; her entire person was cut out on the background of the luminous air and the blue sky. Never before had he seen more lustrous dark skin, a more seductive figure or more delightfully shaped fingers than those through which the sunlight gleamed.<sup>1</sup>

But when finally Madame Arnoux offers herself to Frederic, he rejected her love. Another main theme of the *Sentimental Education* is the hollowness or emptiness of the aristocratic society. Although Frederic aspires to become a part of Paris aristocrats society but soon he realizes the emptiness of the high class living. Flaubert presents a satirical picture of this privileged segment of the population who at first appeared to be good but in reality it is empty, hollow. An example of vacuity of the society appears throughout the novel. Frederic always wants to indulge in this society but find silliness in their talks. He describes the conversation of high class people as "aimless lifeless and inconsequential" yet he still wants to be a part of them.

Influence of fate and luck is another main theme of the novel. Frederic always believes that his life is very much influenced by the fate and luck. Once he flips a coin to decide whether to visit Madam Arnoux, he attributes the outcome to fate

rather than to mere possibility and wants to capture the attention of Madam Arnoux, he credits fate and luck for his succession and failure. Another example of luck is when his inherited property has been stolen by Rosque, he decided that luck has created an opportunity for him to work at his own talent.

We can pick another example of fate when we see that Frederic and Madam Arnoux likes each other very much and both claim the same devotion to each other, but they take no step to consummate their relationship instead they spend time in complaining about fate. After several years one day, Madame Arnoux visited him. They both renew their love for each other. But when she takes off her hat, Frederic sees that her hair is all white. She has come to give herself to him, but he is uninterested.

One of the most famous and important work of Flaubert is *Madame Bovary*, this story is a life, a life of a lady who lives for herself without thinking about good and bad. She was so busy in herself; she forgot that she was not acceptable in this society. Every woman is not meant for the family or for giving birth to a child. These things are not known to them first, but if they knew also, then what are their solutions? When this type of woman knotted in the institution named "marriage" everything family, husband, love, womanhood are spoiled. Their life has a tragic end.

Now we are living in 21 century and in this scenario also we do not find any suitable solution for this type of life. The life one wants to live for her or him. This kind of liberated or unrestrained person cannot fly high in the sky, but a writer has no boundation with time or place. He works freely, he is free to fly high in the sky of imagination and fancy and give equal opportunity to his characters.

*Madame Bovary* is Flaubert's debut novel. It became a best seller when it was published as a single volume in April 1857. The novel is now considered Flaubert's masterpiece as well as a seminal work of realism. The British critic James wood writes in *how fiction works*: "Flaubert established for good or evil, what readers think of as modern realist narration and his influence is almost too familiar to be visible"<sup>2</sup>

*Madame Bovary* is a story of a young woman Emma who in order to fulfill her wishes and



dreams ruins her life. The main theme of this novel is the conflict between dreams and reality. Emma lives in a romantic dream world, which is more real to her than real life. Flaubert frequently mocks at her romantic day dreaming and her taste of literature. Mario Vargas Llosa often said: "if Emma Bovary had not read all those novels, it is possible that her fate might have been different."<sup>3</sup>

Dissatisfaction in marriage life is also one of the main themes of the novel. She married to Charles Bovary who is an ordinary doctor and belongs to a middle class family. Emma grows more and more dissatisfied with her husband and his way of life. Emma believed that nothing is changed after her marriage also. Charles adores his wife and finds her faultless, despite Charles's complete devotion to Emma, she despises him.

Her quest for true love and affection runs throughout the novel. Emma is a lady with lots of desire; she has a highly romanticized view of the world and craves beauty, passion as well as high society. Emma had many love affairs. Since from childhood she has dreamt of a perfect romance, a perfect world of happiness.

Dullness of middle class life in one of the main themes in the novel. Emma belongs to middle class family and throughout her life she struggles to find something greater. Her fantastical impression of aristocratic society is seen at the ball party where Emma tried hard to indulge herself and act like an aristocratic lady though she had been not even noticed by anyone there. She cannot forget the memory of ball party. As "The memory of this ball, then became an occupation for Emma. Whenever the Wednesday came round, she said to herself she awake, 'Ah! I was there a week –a fortnight-three weeks ago. "<sup>4</sup>

The author also presents the struggle and challenges faced by the women during his time. In the novel Emma hopes her baby will be a boy because she believes that "a women is always hampered" throughout the novel. we see how the men in Emma's life have the power to change her life in good and bad ways. Her relationship with Rudolph is also not good. He is only playing with her emotions. Rudolph seduction for Emma is cold and calculated. He has no intention of marrying her. Then her next

relation with Leon instead of bringing happiness to her results only in tedium and bankruptcy as Emma goes more and more in debt trying to make herself more appealing to Leon. The bailiff comes to her home to make his debts clear. She asked her lovers for money, but they turn their backs on her. At the end she takes poison to end her life. Emma believed that the poison would give her a peaceful death but, instead she became horribly ill and suffers great pain from the poison.

While writing the novel, Flaubert wrote that it would be: "A book about nothing a book depending on nothing internal, which would be held together by the external strength of its style. "<sup>5</sup>

Flaubert's always presents the reality of the day-to-day life. In both the novels ,he deals with the theme of realism. In Sentimental Education he presents a story of a young man who in order to establish himself among the aristocrats looses everything. On the other hand Madame Bovary is the gap between the illusions and reality, the distance between desire and its fulfillment Long established it as one of the greatest novel ever written. Henry James wrote; "Madame Bovary has a perfection that not only stamps it, but that makes it stand almost alone."<sup>6</sup> Both the novels presents the grim reality of today's generation. Flaubert's novels act like a mirror of society. His place in the field of literature is eminent and incredible.

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