

Degree 1 (Honours)

Paper 1

By, Aashad Khan

Dept. of English

J. N. College Madhubani

Date: _____
Page: _____

ANKIT

03/07/20

George Eliot
(1819 - 1880)

Lecture - 1

In nearly all the writers of the Victorian Age we note, on the one hand, a strong intellectual tendency to analyze the problems of life, and on the other, a tendency to teach, that is, to explain to men the method by which these problems may be solved. The novel especially seem to lose sight of the purely artistic ideal of writing, and to aim definitely at moral instruction. In George Eliot both these tendencies reach a climax. She is more obviously, more consciously a preacher and moralizer than any of her great contemporaries. Though profoundly religious at heart, she was largely occupied by the scientific spirit of the age; and finding no religious creed or political system satisfactory, she fell back upon her duty as the supreme law of life. All her novels aim, first to show in individuals the play of universal moral forces, and second, to establish the moral law as the basis of human society. Aside from this moral teaching, we look to George Eliot for the reflection of country life in England, just as we look to Dickens for pictures of the city streets, and to Thackeray for the vomities of society. Of all the women writers who have helped and are still helping to place our English novels at the head of the world's fiction, she holds at present unquestionably

the highest rank.

Works of George Eliot: These are conveniently divided into three groups, corresponding to the three periods of her life. The first group includes all her early essays and miscellaneous work, from her translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, in 1846, to her union with Lewes in 1854. The second group includes *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*, all published between 1858 and 1861. These four novels of the middle period are based on the author's own life and experience; their scenes are laid in the country, and their characters are taken from the solid people of the midlands, with whom George Eliot had been familiar since childhood. They are probably author's most enduring works. They have a naturalness, a spontaneity, at times a flash of real humour, which are lacking in her later novels; and they show a rapid development of literary power which reaches a climax in *Silas Marner*.

The novels of Italian life, *Romola* (1863) marks a transition to the third group, which includes three more novels, — *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1872), *Daniel Deronda* (1876), — the ambitious dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), and a collection of miscellaneous essays called *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879). The general impression of these works is not so favorable as that produced by the novels of the middle period.