ASSIGNMENT
MEG-03 BRITISH NOVEL

Programme: MEG/2026/2027
Course Code: MEG 03
Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions in this assignment.

All questions carry equal marks. (20 marks each)

1. "A reading of *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the unjust treatment of women in the system of inheritance that was prevalent in eighteenth century England." Comment on this statement and show how gender injustice is a major theme of this novel.
2. Comment on the complex narrative technique adopted by Emily Bronte in *Wuthering Heights.*
3. "*Great Expectations* is a masterly exploration of the themes of crime, respectability and wealth." Discuss this statement.
4. Examine how the forces of race and class shape characters and episodes in *A Passage to India.*
5. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* may be considered as an example of an 'artistic Bildungsroman'. Discuss.

1. “A reading of Pride and Prejudice reveals the unjust treatment of women in the system of inheritance that was prevalent in eighteenth century England.” Comment on this statement and show how gender injustice is a major theme of this novel.

Answer

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice is often remembered as a novel of love, manners and marriage, but the story also shows how insecure a woman's position could be when property and money were controlled mainly by men. The problem is visible from the beginning through the Bennet family. Mr. Bennet owns Longbourn, yet his five daughters cannot inherit the estate because it is entailed upon a male heir. After Mr. Bennet's death, the property is expected to pass to Mr. Collins, a distant male relative. Thus the future of Mrs. Bennet and her daughters depends not on their ability or moral worth but on rules that favour men. This inheritance system gives the novel a strong background of gender injustice.

The entail is not a small legal detail; it shapes almost every important decision in the Bennet household. Mrs. Bennet's obsession with getting her daughters married is comic, but it comes from a real fear. There is no son who can keep Longbourn in the family. If the daughters remain unmarried, they may have very little financial security after their father's death. Mr. Bennet has not saved enough money to make them independent. The girls therefore face a social order in which marriage is closely tied to survival. A man may seek marriage for affection, companionship or convenience, but a woman without property often has fewer choices.

This inequality becomes clearer through Charlotte Lucas. Charlotte is sensible, practical and fully aware that she has little fortune and is not considered a beauty. When she accepts Mr. Collins, Elizabeth is shocked because she cannot imagine marrying without love. Charlotte, however, sees marriage as a respectable economic arrangement. Her choice is not presented simply as foolishness. It shows what limited options were available to many women. She gains a home and a secure social position by marrying a man she does not deeply respect. Her decision reveals how an unjust economic structure can influence personal relationships.

Elizabeth Bennet's position is different because she refuses to surrender her judgement merely for security. She rejects Mr. Collins even though marrying him would keep Longbourn within the family and protect her own future. She also rejects Darcy's first proposal because his pride, manner and treatment of others