

**The Nineteenth-Century Novel**  
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**Lecture - 11**  
**Persuasion Vol.II, Chapters 13-18 (Continued 2)**

Hello and welcome back. We are still in the second volume of Persuasion, and we are going to look at the complications that will eventually resolve the plot of this novel.

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Mrs Smith

*Anne Elliot*

- "widow and poor....a cripple"
- "a disposition to converse and be cheerful beyond her expectation. Neither the dissipation of the past—nor the restrictions of the present, neither sickness nor sorrow seemed to have closed her heart or ruined her spirits."

At this point of time in the novel, we are introduced to a new character called Mrs. Smith. She is a very interesting character, and she does play a significant role in offering certain crucial information about some of the characters who are major players in the novel. So who exactly is Mrs. Smith? She is a widow, she is very poor, and she is also a cripple, that is, she has some kind of disability which prevents her from walking normally.

So she has come to Bath to take the baths, you know, to have those therapeutic baths which will help her, you know, recover from this ailment. And Mrs. Smith has a connection with Anne Elliot. In fact, Mrs. Smith was one of the classmates of Anne Elliot when she was at school years ago, and after the death of Anne Elliot's mother, Mrs. Smith was very very useful to Anne in the sense that she comforted Anne Elliot during those difficult times.

So now is the time for Anne Elliot to return the favour, and she comes to know about Mrs. Smith's presence in the town of Bath through her visit to Anne's governess. So you can see

how Anne's mobility does offer her immediate benefits too, in terms of the kind of knowledge about other people which will be useful in making her choices about her potential life partner. Now, what kind of a character is Mrs. Smith?

"She is a person who has a disposition to converse and be cheerful beyond her expectation. Neither the dissipation of the past nor the restrictions of the present, neither sickness nor sorrow seemed to have closed her heart or ruined her spirits." So this is a very important characteristic of Mrs. Smith, which is that even though she has fallen on difficult fortunes, even though she is under extremely limiting circumstances financially and physically, she has not, you know, become very very negative or she has not become depressed. So the excerpt here says that neither sickness nor sorrow seemed to have closed her heart to human company or ruined her spirits or dampened her spirits. So even though she is down in her luck, she continues to be cheerful. So another very interesting point about Mrs. Smith's background is offered through this word "dissipation".

So we get a sense that in her past, she has been lavish in some kind or other, she has had a luxurious life, and not a very careful life in terms of managing her finances. So that kind of clue is also offered through certain words in this excerpt.

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Mrs Smith

- "that elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself, which was from nature alone. It was the choicest gift of Heaven; and Anne viewed her friend as one of those instances in which, by a merciful appointment, it seems designed to counterbalance almost every other want."

*for instant discourse*

*the Musgroves*

*Mrs Croft*  
*Mrs Harville*

We are getting further positive information from the narrator about Mrs. Smith. In fact, Mrs. Smith is one of the two other characters who have a kind of a very admirable disposition of mind and nature, in terms of female characters. So the other two figures are Mrs. Croft and

Mrs. Harville. So these two women are extremely useful within their domestic setup as well as are good companions, ideal companions to their husbands.

In fact, Mrs. Croft constantly travels with Mr. Croft, Admiral Croft and they do things jointly, they take joint decisions; and Mrs. Harville does take care of her ailing husband. She decides where to walk, when to walk, how much to walk so that, you know, Mr. Harville is not straining himself. So all these women are very positive pictures of womanhood, and in Mrs. Smith, who is a complex character, we do have positive pictures of femininity.

In fact, even though there are certain aspects of her character which some people might regard as manipulative, the third-person narrator Austen's voice does kind of paint a favorable portrait of Mrs. Smith. Okay, so what is the positive set of attributes that are given to Mrs. Smith here? "That elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good and of finding employment which carried her out of herself which was from nature alone. It was the choicest gift of heaven; and Anne viewed her friend as one of those instances in which, by a merciful appointment, it seems designed to counterbalance every other want." So this is of course free indirect discourse, that is the narrative point of view we have here. And the set of elements about Mrs. Smith's characteristics are filtered through Anne's consciousness. So Anne thinks that Mrs. Smith has an elasticity of mind, the ability to kind of recover, spring back to normalcy, to good spirits.

And she thinks that Mrs. Smith can comfort herself. She has a character that can offer solace to herself, and she can immediately, you know, move from the evil circumstances to good, to think positive things about life, and she can also make herself productive, she is capable of finding employment which will kind of make her forget her difficult circumstances, and all these are genetic according to Anne.

It is kind of inbuilt in her disposition, in her characteristic. It does not come from outside, it comes from within. That is what is interpreted from this set of phrase "which was from nature alone". So she thinks that this set of attributes: the elasticity of mind, the disposition to be comforted, and the capacity to think good about life even though life has been difficult to her, and all these are gifts of heaven.

These are providential attributes, these have been endowed by God himself on Mrs. Smith. And further, Anne thinks that all these attributes, you know, somehow make her wealthy in some sense. She is wealthy in terms of her quality of mind. She is rich in spirit, she is rich in positive perspectives about life, and these riches counterbalance her physical want, her economical deprivation.

So, you know, even though she is poor, she is richer in mind, that is what Anne wants to communicate here. And in this regard, I am also reminded of other characters, especially the Musgroves. And they can be contrasted with Mrs. Smith, and the particular incident that comes to my mind now is that fall suffered by Louisa Musgrove. When that accident happens, you know, everybody in her family, the Musgroves, do not know what to do, how to comfort one another, and they depend on Anne Elliot to do that.

So we can contrast that inability to comfort oneself, you know, which becomes the identification characteristic of the Musgroves, with Mrs. Smith who is able to comfort herself, and she does it in circumstances where she does not have anybody else to do that job. She is almost alone all the time. So she is admirable in that regard.

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Nurse Rooke

- "She always takes the right time for applying. Everybody's heart is open, you know, when they have recently escaped from severe pain, or are recovering the blessing of health, and Nurse Rooke thoroughly understands when to speak. She is a shrewd, intelligent, sensible woman."

Handwritten annotations on the slide include a red box around the word "applying", a red box around the phrase "She is a shrewd, intelligent, sensible woman.", and a red arrow pointing from the boxed phrase to the text "Mrs Smith to Anne Elliot".

The slide is shown in a video frame with a woman in a red and white plaid shirt speaking.

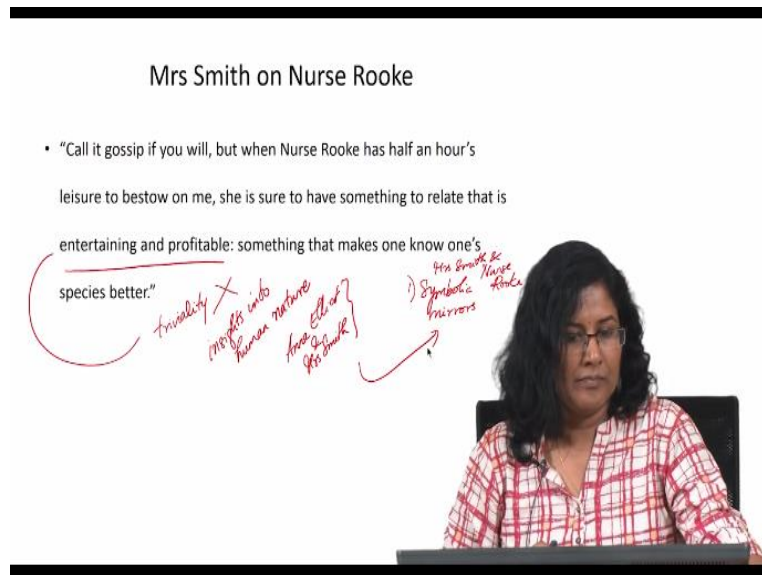
Now she has a companion at Bath, Mrs. Smith has a companion at Bath, and she is called Nurse Rooke. She is the sister of the landlady where Mrs. Smith is a tenant, and she has been very helpful to Mrs. Smith. What does she do? In fact, Nurse Rooke always takes the right time for applying for some kind of assistance on the behalf of Mrs. Smith. Everybody's heart is open, you know, when they have recently escaped from severe pain or are recovering the

blessings of health, and nurse Rooke thoroughly understands when to speak. She is a shrewd, intelligent, sensible woman.

So these are the words uttered by Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Smith says these words to Anne Elliot when she is visiting Mrs. Smith. And what are the significances of these remarks? One is that Mrs. Smith is able to get the support of a working-class woman, Nurse Rooke, and Nurse Rooke is visiting that building which is called Westgate Building because her sister is the landlady to Mrs. Smith, so that is the context for the presence of nurse Rooke. And Mrs. Smith knits certain things, and Nurse Rooke takes it upon herself to sell these things to the people where she is employed, and this is what is offered as the philosophy behind some of the windfall that happens to Mrs. Smith, and she says that when Nurse Rooke talks she talks at the right time to her employers and she does it when somebody has recently recovered from severe pain or they are recovering from some kind of ill health. So all these circumstances will make them very very sympathetic to others who are in similar situations. So this is the psychological grasp that Mrs. Smith and Nurse Rooke have about others in this world, and Mrs. Smith says that she is a shrewd, intelligent and sensible woman and all these characteristics can be applied to Mrs. Smith herself. This is an interesting character study, not only of Nurse Rooke, but also Mrs. Smith. And we can kind of get a glimpse of the working class character Nurse Rooke here. Usually, the criticism is that Jane Austen does not, you know, capture so much of the lives of the working classes, and here we get a window into such characters and Nurse Rooke is a perfect embodiment of such characters.

And even though Nurse Rooke is very intelligent and sensible and sympathetic, the word “shrewd” also suggests that she can be very clever and manipulative. So even though she knows when to apply to get assistance, she is also somehow manipulating the circumstances of her employers, so that she and people who are being served by her are benefited.

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And there are further benefits to the presence of Nurse Rooke for Mrs. Smith, and what is that? And that is, Mrs. Smith says that, “Call it gossip if you will, but when Nurse Rooke has half an hour’s leisure to bestow on me, she is sure to have something to relate that is entertaining and profitable, something that makes one know one’s species better.” So we get further, richer, you know, picture of Nurse Rooke through the words of Mrs. Smith.

And her understanding of Nurse Rooke also gives us an understanding of Mrs. Smith too. So they are somehow mirrors of one another to a certain extent. So if you look at the relationship between Anne and Mrs. Smith, in fact Anne also get some information through Mrs. Smith, and therefore she is performing the same function as Nurse Rooke is performing, a function for Mrs. Smith, so which is why I call them mirror images.

So symbolic mirrors of one another, Mrs. Smith and Nurse Rooke. So she is economically beneficial, she is also culturally beneficial, or you can call it, you know, as Nurse Rooke being a some kind of domestic spy of the people who are staying in Bath at that time. So Nurse Rooke does gossip, and she, Mrs. Smith, calls that gossip as entertaining and profitable. So gossip is usually something that is considered to be trivial, but here it is not triviality that Nurse Rooke offers, in fact it is entertaining and profitable, and Mrs. Smith calls it as an insight into human nature. So gossip becomes insights into human nature. What is interesting about this excerpt is that it kind of echoes Anne Elliot's idea of good company. If you recall, Anne Elliot tells that my idea of good company is a set of people who are well-informed, and it is exciting to talk to them who can offer a lot of information and interesting insights.

So Mrs. Smith seems to kind of echo that set of ideas offered by Anne Elliot to Mr. Elliot. So Mrs. Smith and Anne Elliot are also somehow mirrors of one another, as symbolic mirrors.

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Sir Walter on Anne

- "Westgate Buildings!" said he, "and who is Miss Anne Elliot to be visiting in Westgate Buildings?...."
- Everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you.

*lower classes*  
*the Elliott aristocracy!*

Now somebody is not very happy with Anne's visits to Mrs. Smith, and that is her father. There is no surprise there, because Westgate Buildings are part of a neighborhood which is not wealthy, or which does not have a superior status, identity. So he says "Westgate Buildings! And who is Miss Anne Elliot to be visiting in Westgate Buildings?" And he thinks that it is inappropriate for his daughter, an Elliot, you know, the daughter of a baronet, to be visiting somebody in Westgate Buildings.

And he further comes up with a harsher remark which says that everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you. This is a potent remark about, you know, Anne Elliot and that too from, you know, her own father. And it is not a remark which is, you know, appreciative of Anne in any way. In fact, it demeans her, it disrespects Anne Elliot's, you know, proclivities, desires and her habits.

And he says here that everything that revolts other people, everything that disgusts other people such as low company, people from the lower classes, paltry rooms such as the ones that you can find at Westgate Buildings, foul air, perhaps that is the kind of atmosphere in places like Westgate Buildings, and disgusting associations once again referring to people of lower classes who are also very economically deprived of course.

And he says that all these attributes are welcome and inviting to you, to Anne Elliot, and he is offended by her, you know, preferences. So it is telling also about Sir Walter Elliot, when he says that everything that revolts other people, in fact he is talking only about the Elliots who represent the narrow-minded aristocracy. So here the reference is to Sir Walter Elliot, perhaps to Elizabeth Elliot, to Mary Musgrove who cannot stand all these disgusting low company.

And it also tells us the divide between the aristocracy and the other classes, and Anne is kind of the transition figure who is part of the upper class, but who is also very welcoming of the lower sections in society.

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The slide is titled "Lady Russell's Advice". It features a quote from the text: "You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition; and if I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation and name, and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to her in being more highly valued, My dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life!". The quote has several handwritten annotations: "Character" is written above "disposition"; "No." is written to the right of "My dearest Anne"; "Lady Elliot" is written to the left of "My dearest Anne"; "Mr Elliot" and "Sir Walter Elliot" are written in a box below "My dearest Anne"; "Not marrying Capt Wentworth" is written to the right of "My dearest Anne"; "2) Henry Charles Musgrove (No.)" and "3) Henry Mr Elliot" are written in a list below "My dearest Anne".

Below the quote is a video inset of a woman with glasses and a red and white checkered shirt, speaking and gesturing with her right hand.

Now let us look at Lady Russell's advice to Anne Elliot, and she is advising Anne about her choice of life partner, and this is the second advice that she, or in fact the third advice that she gives to Anne about, you know, her choice of a life partner. So let us look at the other choices before we look at this particular excerpt. So first she advised Anne about not marrying Captain Wentworth.

And this happened 8 years ago, that was the first advice that Lady Russell offers. And second, she also advised Anne to marry Charles Musgrove. In the first case, Anne buckles in to her pressure, so she says no to Captain Wentworth. In the second case, it is a positive pressure on the part of Lady Russell to Anne to marry Charles Musgrove, the neighboring squire's son, and Anne of course refuses to marry him.



And he goes and marries her sister, Mary Musgrove. So she says no to this marriage even though Lady Russell would have liked to see her married. And this is the third advice, and which is, she asks Anne to marry Mr. Elliot, who is going to inherit Kellynch Hall, that big grand house. And if she marries Mr. Elliot, she would be the mistress, she would be like her mother, and she would be called Lady Elliot.

So this is the context. Now let us look at the excerpt here. Lady Russell tells Anne, “You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition; and if I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation and name and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to her in being more highly valued! My dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life.”

So it is a very clever argument that Lady Russell comes up with in order to convince her ward, you know, who is Anne Elliot. Lady Russell has been guiding Anne throughout Anne's life, and we can see the importance of Lady Russell's words here. And let us see whether Anne does given to Lady Russell's advice. So what does she say exactly, you are your mother's self in countenance.

You are like your mother, you resemble your mother, not only physically, countenance physically, but also in disposition in character. So you are a mirror of your mother, and she says that if I might be allowed to imagine, if I can imagine as she was in situation and name and presiding and blessing in the same spot, and she says that I am imagining you in the place of your mother as she was in situation, that is, Anne's mother would be Lady Elliot.

And Anne would, as I said, get the same name if she married Mr. Elliot, so you will come to own that name, Lady Elliot, as well as the place, position. What position is that? That is mistress of Kellynch Hall. And she says that on top of that, you know, on top of getting the name of Lady Elliot and the position of the mistress of Kellynch Hall, she says that you will be more highly valued by your husband.

And who is that husband? That is Mr. Elliot if Anne marries him. And the other implication is that when Lady Russell says that you will be more highly valued, the implication is that her mother was less valued by Sir Walter Elliot. So that is the implication which needs to be noted here. It is very crucial, so we do get a sense that the marriage of Sir Walter Elliot and

Lady Elliot was not very happy, probably because he did not respect or value Lady Elliot so much.

And look at the final argument there, my dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life, and she is playing that age card, she says that I am kind of getting on in terms of years, and your marriage to Mr. Elliot, which will give you a lot of security and status and luxury and wealth, would make me very happy to me at this time of life, when I do not think there are many things which will make me happier.

So these are some of the arguments that Lady Russell puts forth to Anne to make her to marry Mr. Elliot.

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#### Anne's response

- The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the precious name of "Lady Elliot" first revived in herself; of being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist. Lady Russell said not another word, willing to leave the matter to its own operation...The same image of Mr Elliot speaking for himself brought Anne to composure again. The charm of Kellynch and of "Lady Elliot" all faded away.



Now how does Anne respond? This is a crucial moment in the novel, and this moment should be closely looked at and analyzed and understood. So she is at the beginning slightly caught up in all these fancies that Lady Russell offers her, you know, that situation about resembling the mother, taking her place, you know, actually being in some of the spots, the favorite spots perhaps of the mother, you know, going back to those spatiality.

All these are very charming to Anne. But, does the charm stay on in her mind? That is the big question. This is Anne's response. "The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of having the precious name of 'Lady Elliot' first revived in herself; of being rested to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home forever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist. Lady Russell said not another word, willing to leave the matter to its own operation.

The same image of Mr. Elliot speaking for himself brought Anne to composure again. The charm of Kellynch and of Lady Elliot all faded away.” So the words of Lady Russell is very much effective, that is the clear reading that we have here. To a certain extent, Lady Elliot is successful because, you know, Anne feels that it was a charm that she could not immediately resist the idea of becoming Lady Elliot.

And she thinks that as she can get the home too, she can be restored to Kellynch Hall, and she can call it her home again, you know, legitimately. She would not have to move homes to take care of siblings who need her, and she does not have to stay in others' homes to get security and comfort, and if Kellynch Hall can become her home again. A perpetual home, a kind of a permanent home, is a charming thing to have.

But, quite soon that charm kind of deconstructs in her mind. When does it deconstruct? That is the important question. It deconstructs when she kind of has an imagination of Mr. Elliot speaking for himself. So when she imagines Elliot talking to her, possibly proposing marriage, she kind of becomes more composed. All these fancies and imaginations kind of are brushed away by her and the charm of the home, the charm of Kellynch Hall fades away.

And what fades away too is that term of Lady Elliot which could be applied to her if she married. So that “Lady Elliot” identity is something that she can do away with. She cannot want that term if she has to have Mr. Elliot too, you know, in her life. So she says I do not need these charms, the charms of the permanent home especially in Kellynch Hall and the name of Lady Elliot.

So Anne is kind of breaking herself free once again from the influence of her guide and her mother figure, which is Lady Russell. Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next

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