

## The Representation of Women in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen



**Sarah Nawaz Momin**

Research Scholar, Shivaji University,  
Kolhapur, Maharashtra  
Assistant Professor,  
Swayam Siddhi Degree College, Temghar,  
Bhiwandi - Thane(421308)  
Email: [sarahmomin999@gmail.com](mailto:sarahmomin999@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Pride and Prejudice* is the second novel by English author Jane Austen publishes in 1813. A novel of manners, it follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist of the book. Mr Bennet, owner of the long bourn estate in Hertfordshire, has five daughters, but his property's entailed and can only be passed to a male heir. His wife also lacks an inheritance, so his family faces becoming poor upon his death. This, it is imperative that at least one of the daughters merry well to support the others, which is a primary motivation driving the plot. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen's depiction of womanhood is both varies and expansive. A woman can be gentle in spirit, incapable of

finding I'll in other. Daughters can be impossibly "silly" in their romantic endeavors.

*Pride and Prejudice* offers a nuanced portrayal of Women's rile in early 19th century England. While women were expected to confirm to certain societal expectations, Austen also highlighted the limitations and dangers of these expectations. The novel presents a range of female characters, each with their own strengths and weakness, reflecting the diversity and complexity.

### KEY WORDS

Feminism, gender equality, marriage, male dominated society, rich background, social norms, independent woman, female image, inheritance, gentry



ISSN : 2584-1963

## RESEARCH PAPER

### Introduction:

The novel describes Bennet's five daughters, and the protagonist is the second daughter, ELIZABETH. She met Darcy at the ball, but she heard that he was arrogant. So his first image was not good in Elizabeth's view. However, after some twist and turns, Elizabeth lifted his prejudice against Darcy. Darcy also put down arrogance, and they finally fall in love with each other. The content of *Pride and Prejudice* became popular in the society and the world situation in the conservative and occluded state from the end of the 18th century to the early 19th century and has been adapted into movies and TV series in many times.

Followings are some data analysis and findings of the representation of women in the novel. **MARITAL VIEW THROUGH FIVE COUPLES IN 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE' :**

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen used free discourse, which means 3rd person narration. Jane Austen describes five different pairs of the couple which represent five different marriage views in the novel. The first couple is Bennet couple: blind marriage. From Jane's portrayal, we can also see Bennett couple's personality, hobbies and even gap between thoughts. When Bennet was fascinated by her beauty, she found that Mrs Bennett is just a short-sighted and stupid woman. Their marriage is the result of blind impulses, which is unfortunate. The second couple is the marriage between Lydia and Wickham, it is driven by lust and marriage is a failure. After the marriage Wickham is often went out to have fun and Lydia often cried. The third couple is Charlotte and Collins: Money marriage. In the *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte is the earliest marry of the five sisters. In her marriage to Collins, money accounts for a large proportion and the factor of love is minimal. The marriage which is based on money and does not consider feelings, is tragic and has no happiness at all. The fourth couple is Jane and Bentley a happy marriage. Jane is beautiful, gentle and dignified girl whose character matches the beauty. She is very admired for Bentley. Bentley has a talent and a decent manner. The two are relatively close in character and relatively indecisive. After a while, the relationship between the two became deeper and deeper. Because of their character their feelings were interrupted but they have that



ISSN : 2584-1963

© Seagull Journals. All rights reserved.

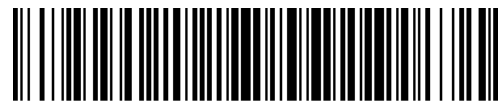
emotional foundation. Since love and eventually, cross obstacles and enter the palace of marriage. Such a marriage is happy.

#### ELIZABETH BENNET:A SYMBOL OF FEMININE INDEPENDENCE:

The fifth couple is Elizabeth and Darcy which is the perfect marriage. The love of Elizabeth and Darcy always shifted to the novel. Elizabeth is intelligent and independent and has rational consideration of marriage. In her view, a marriage without an emotional foundation is unhappy. The process of Elizabeth search for true love in the novel reflects the true value of marriage. Elizabeth is self-respecting and self-love and has her ideas, the courage to pursue her happiness and ultimately to be happy, but also has a lot of property. This kind of marriage is perfect and this is the marriage view of the author Jane Austen. Modern women will consider a lot when choosing their Lifelong partner. Is the basis of a happy marriage a love, wealth and other factors? But the women of that era did not have thus power. In this novel the most important female image is Elizabeth because Elizabeth represents the author itself. She treats herself as Elizabeth in her novel. This can be seen in the social context of the author Jane Austen. Jane Austen herself had no portion and could not afford a handsome dowry which prevented one early mutual attraction from becoming anything serious. Later a fairly prosperous man proposed to her. However her strong sense of independence and pursuit of spiritual happiness did not lead her to make a vulgar decision. In the 19th century, marriage was dominated by the material base in English society. Social relationships and economic mode determined the rule of marriage. In Austen's day the only road to middle class lady's happy life was to marry well. The wrong choice of mate could spell social and financial disaster. Almost every woman's ideal man was a billionaire or at least a single gentleman with a piece of an estate and much money every year.

#### SOCIAL CONSTRAINS AND WOMEN’S CHOICES IN AUSTEN'S ERA:

Jane Austen really wanted to change something. SO the whole story in Pride and Prejudice is about marriage, which is what Mrs. Bennet is worried about her five daughters. Although many feminist believe that marriage is not the ultimate destination for women, this novel still resolves around this topic. When Elizabeth chose marriage, the spirit of equality was reflected. Elizabeth choice of marriage is mainly reflected in two aspects: the first in her rejection of Collins; the



ISSN : 2584-1963

© Seagull Journals. All rights reserved.

second is her acceptance of Darcy. In a male dominated society, women are second to men. Women choice of marriage is not based on their wishes, but the criteria of men's decisions or social conventions. In the eyes of the people, because she has neither a decent family nor a rich background, Elizabeth's best choice is to marry Mr. Collins. Even more, unfortunately, women do not have the right to inheritance. Mr Collins is the inherited of the estate. If they can combine, it is in line with recognized social norms. Elizabeth's rejection is the best embodiment of feminism. She is different from another woman in small talk. She dared to say her thoughts and she dared to challenge social customs just like Jane Austen. She expressed contempt for the so called social norms. When Elizabeth and Collins visited lady Catherine, everyone was respectful to Mrs. Catherine, but she was free to say what she was thinking, not afraid to offend the rich and powerful Lady Catherine. Elizabeth is not afraid of power and money. This is exactly what is necessary for an independent woman. Elizabeth acceptance of Darcy's love is a sign of her pursuit of equality as a feminist. The most interesting arrangement in the novel is not like we'll known Cinderella plot. Elizabeth, unlike the girl in the fairy tale, accepted her prince, Darcy. The traditional image of women is completely subverted in the novel. When, Darcy asked her to marry, she said dissatisfaction with him and then refused firmly. Elizabeth became heroine with a vision not a helpless, passive Cinderella waiting for her prince charming. Later, after the misunderstanding between the two was lifted, although she was not right with Darcy, she did not wait quality for her fate, but bravely choose her happiness. In marriage her status with her husband was equal. Therefore women can also be in a positive position in life. Since the Women's movement in the early 20th century, Women have gradually gained the right to vote and have played an increasingly important role in society, such as in the medical profession, Education, politics and literature Feminism have always insisted on gender equality and protesting discrimination from male society. Feminism, as a method of criticism, has promoted the development of Literary criticism theory and social progress to a certain extent through clever plots and vivid language.

#### JANE AUSTEN'S CRITIQUE OF MARRIAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS:

Through the women in the novel, the author is only trying to reflect few points. First of all gender is quality awareness. Women were discriminated in Austen's time. If a woman from



ISSN : 2584-1963

© Seagull Journals. All rights reserved.

gentry didn't marry and had no family members who could take her in and provide for her, often the only somewhat respectable alternative was to become a governess or a teacher in a school. Even those positions, however, lowered her social status, making it almost impossible for her to attract a husband who could provide for her adequately. To make matters worse, the income she could earn through such means was, in most cases barely enough for survival. Thus, marriage to an economically respectable man was considered to be the only legitimate choice for most women of the gentry or aristocracy. It was tradition that men only inherited all the fortune. Therefore women had to obey and gain their life necessities through an adequate marriage. In Austen's view money and love are the foundation of marriage. The lack of one of these two conditions is imperfect. As the basis of marriage, money is the material guarantee for marriage to happiness in the future, love is the premise of marriage and only marriage full of love is not happy because poverty can only turn happiness into an illusion bubble. Although marriage doesn't depend entirely on the matter, marriage without material security, happiness is difficult to guarantee.

Objectives of the study:

- *To know how beautifully Jane Austen represented women in Pride and Prejudice.*
- *To understand about the social norms and Practices of that time.*
- *To evaluate how marriage played an important role in the life of a woman of that era.*
- *To understand how the society was dominated by male and if a woman wanted to live a happy and respectful life she had to marry a rich gentleman.*
- *To understand about the life of the women during Jane Austen time, when their only aim was to get or grab a rich gentleman for marriage and became respectful in the eye of so called high society.*



ISSN : 2584-1963

© Seagull Journals. All rights reserved.

Research Methodology:

- *This study is conducted to evaluate the representation of women in Pride and Prejudice.*
- *The present data is based on secondary data collection. The information has been collected from published books, journals, articles, newspapers and websites.*
- *This study is conducted to create awareness among people (researchers, scholars, students) life of the women during late 19th and early 20th century.*
- *The descriptive and analytical methods are used to carry the research operation on the given topic.*

Concluding Reflection on Women's Value and Austen's Legacy:

Overall Jane Austen's novel has contributed to the advancement of women. She made lots of female character and representation of them makes this novel classic. Pride and prejudice taught us an unspeakable truth: when the family is harmonious, everyone will be stable. The essence of love is the key to the ultimate harmony between family and society.

## REFERENCES

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Feminine Consciousness in Jane Austen's novels (Boar as Camelia)

Journal of Research in Gender studies, Vol.4, No 2, 2014.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A397454326/AONE>

'Jane Austen's ideal man in Pride and Prejudice', Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol3, No. 2, 2013, page no 384.



ISSN : 2584-1963

© Seagull Journals. All rights reserved.