

The Importance of Marriage in the 19th Century British England: Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Represents Love and Marriage, which are not only the Embellishment of Life but the Economic Needs for the People

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Abstract— Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was the novel of Victorian period. This Victorian era was the time of traditions when many aspects have emerged in the field of literature. As a writer of Victorian period Jane Austen was very much successful with the work of romantic fictions. *Pride and Prejudice* has been considered her first novel and the story of it was located in the country of Hertfordshire. The prominent family of this novel was known as the Bennet family. They used to live in a peaceful place called Longbourn. The main attraction of the Bennet family was centered around their daughters' marriage issue. In this novel the two main male characters were Mr. Bingley and his friend Darcy, and other characters did play some vital role regarding the concepts of love and marriage. Surrounded by the wealthy handsome men, Mrs. Bennet was finding the possible match among those opulent persons for her daughters. At first glance Mr. Bingley has found his love towards Jane, while on the other hand Mr. Darcy proved to be the perfect match for Elizabeth. With these two wealthy and decent men, there was the presence of a villain like person named Mr. Wickham, who has settled himself finally with Lydia, the youngest girl of the Bennet family. The main female protagonist of this novel was Elizabeth. She was not a complicated character rather than funny and witty in nature. Her perfect match Mr. Darcy was different than her. He was snobbish, proud and reserved type of character. They both were always sunk in teasing and quarrelling but somehow they were essentially attracted with each other. Elizabeth has confessed that she hates him and also said it frankly after knowing that Mr. Darcy will forgive her. With all those small and big incidents mixed with sadness and happiness, they both eventually got married and lived happily ever after. This paper will actually present the importance of love and marriage in human's life and how

Jane Austen beautifully portrayed these themes of love and marriage which are not only the embellishment of life but also urged for the economical needs for the people through her famous novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

Keyword— Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Love, Marriage, Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley, The Bennet family, Elizabeth, Victorian society.

I. INTRODUCTION

To explore the novel of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, we need to have some ideas about Jane Austen's personal life, how she was in nature and how she became a witty writer of Victorian period and as well as for all era and time. She was somehow a realistic writer of late 18th century and early 19th century. She was born and brought up in a clerical family who provided her with strict education. In her life time she wrote six novels and three unfinished stories. Among the works of Austen *Pride and Prejudice* was the impressive masterpiece. This famous novel has been written in 1813 and soon after the publication of this novel, it got rapid popularity and attracted by huge number of readers. The predominant features of this novel based on the daily lives of the middle class family and their concept of arranging their daughters marriage with the handsome and wealthy types of man. Thus the fascinating subject of *Pride and Prejudice* was based on love and marriage. Jane Austen perfectly showed the reality between marriage and property in her era and made her characters according to the traits of honest, dishonest, lovable, witty, reserved, follower of old systems, for example Mr. Bennet who used to follow the old style of life. While on the other hand, Mrs. Bennet's only aim of life was to arrange the marriage of her daughters and for that reason she has made some great efforts. The main male characters in this novels were young and handsome such as Mr. Bingley

who was a friendly young man while Mr. Darcy was very proud character. He always considered himself as superior than others. The five daughters in Bennet family were different from each other. The first daughter Jane was simple, innocent and never tease or said ill words to anyone. Elizabeth was an ingenious who knew how to protect her own opinions. The third girl in Bennet family was Mary, who liked to read books, especially the classic books. Kitty was completely different than Jane and Elizabeth but follow her other sister Lydia. Kitty didn't possess her own opinions. Lydia who always maintained her own opinion. She was a girl who followed enthralling things, handsome man, and was somehow a little licentious. In this novel, the elders like Mr. And Mrs. Bennet were having different types of characters while their daughters were also maintaining various types of attributes regarding life, love and marriage. The male characters were also different from each other and all those characters were the representative personages of different groups. People always think that Austen was an expert at telling love stories. In fact, the marriage in her novel didn't symbolized about result of love but its also about the economical needs of people. The parents of this novel actually wanted to make a secured life for their daughters, for that reasons they were searching the wealthy and handsome type of guys. This was not the result of love, but the result of economic needs. After reading this book, everyone will go to think deeply about what love is and what marriage is. In this paper, my aim is to present the four marriages which has occurred in this novel, and also i would discuss Jane Austen's marriage values, and its practical significance to modern people.

Brief introduction about Jane Austen

As a most popular female writer in the history of English literature, Jane Austen was born in Steventon on December 16, 1775. And she lived happily in a small social milieu in all her life. She was the youngest of seven children in her family. Austen did receive her education at home. Most importantly her family members were fond of reading books, which influenced her drastically. She used to extend her reading's periphery beyond the 18th century and was highly encouraged by Dr. Johnson. Later she showed her interest in both the fields of poetry and prose. In the section of her novel writings, she was very much accurate and careful to depict her characters. In her first novel *Pride and Prejudice* she did present the actual scenario of love and marriage in her time. The novels offer were packed with the love affairs and marriages of young people, though serious and simple matters and also there was the touch of compassion which was free from ruthlessness. Austen was actually the pioneer of the

novels where she has presented the middle class people's attachment with the landlords, gentry, high social class people. Jane basically got this sense to write about the middle class family as her father was a country vicar. That's why she was trained from her family to be like sincere, unselfish, and down to earth. Her ideology was to be a virtuous man and then only your virtue should be judged in good way. However, Austen was the strict follower of Christian beliefs and she used to take the teaching of Church without question. She did adhere her belief and expressed her doctrine through her writings. The virtues which she used to adore were consists of disciplined life, a honest relationship between husband and wife and a loving and caring upbringing which were reflected through her novels.

II. HEART WARMING LOVE FEELINGS BY THE CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

In the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen has been presented the heart touching and different kinds of love between Darcy and Elizabeth. Besides the love story there was also the presence of troubles in their life. Their love story has primarily set in the country called Hertfordshire. Elizabeth was lived in Longbourn with her other daughters and parents Mr. And Mrs. Bennet. After hearing the arrival news of a wealthy handsome man Bingley, his friend Mr. Darcy, and also two other characters such as Mr. Collins and Mr. Wickham, Mrs. Bennet was feeling intense happiness because she was thinking that she has got the perfect men for her daughters and also she tried her best to get those men's attention for her daughters. At first Mr. Bingley fell in love with the calm and quite Jane while Mr. Darcy became habituated towards Elizabeth and at last found her as his perfect match. Mr. Wickham was the villain of this novel who was having various relationships but at last get settled with Lydia. After Mr Wickham, Mr. Collins was the another character who has been included among the male characters who did occupy the notion to garb love and marriage. He was the man who got the estate of Bennet after the death of Mr. Bennet. From his insight knowledge he thought to propose one of the daughters of Mr and Mrs Bennet. Therefore he proposed Elizabeth. But after being rejected from Elizabeth he got attracted to her good friend Charlotte Lucas and finally did marry with her.

The concept of love and marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen has proved herself as one of the famous female writer in the 19th century. Her main art to attract the mass people was to choose the subject of life very artistically and carefully. Therefore she has been taken the matter of love and marriage as the central theme for her

novels. She contemplated on the issue of love and marriage and came with the result that these two issues such as love and marriage are the salient matters in human life. After Shakespeare, she was the only writer who did portray the theme of love in a very realistic way and placed love within the social context. Therefore, Jane Austen's heroines were very witty and sensible in love and free from irrational activities. In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen made her heroines as intelligent than attractive looks. For the issue of marriage, Austen has been depicted a very logical views of marriage. In this way Austen did occupy a special place among other English novelists. Charlotte Bronte made the following status on Jane Austen.

"She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of gentle English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with the stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes, no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet. What sees keenly? Speaks aptly, moves flexibility, it suits her to study but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentiment target of death this Miss Austen ignores". (qtd. in Walt 127).

Towards Jane Austen the significance of marriage occupies the vital place

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* has been constructed according to the concept of realistic activities and far from distorted and improbable matters. In her time women were used to kept themselves inside of homely environment with their essential duties towards husband, children and the overall maintenance of houses. Women of 19th century were also considered themselves attached to sewing cloths, singing songs, dancing, writing, reading and play musical instruments. Those women were purposefully assigned to marry any wealthy man in order to make their life safe and secure. To show the characteristics of those women and their family, *Pride and Prejudice* has been written beautifully and realistically. The main plot of this novel was incredibly controversial with the cultures of that time but in spite of it, this novel has created an exceptional impression with the theme of love and marriage. The theme of love and marriage has been seen as the biggest subject matter throughout the novel. As a realistic and logical writer, Jane Austen has proclaimed a suitable image of

marriage because she believed in an disciplined and balanced life therefore considered a suitable marriage as the best way to implement of her belief. Towards Jane Austen marriage means the perfect union between two sensible persons with the positive signs of self-knowledge, self-control and self-respect. To prove her belief on marriage and true love, *Pride and Prejudice* was embedded with four marriages but all were different from each other. And those different marriages actually showed us the social characteristics and complications of that time of Jane Austen.

Love represents as the necessity of life

In *Pride and prejudice* Jane Austen made the issue of love neither a devastating thing nor a very fathomless feeling between the two lovers. She has presented the love affairs of the novel's characters according to the necessity of life and free from exaggeration and ostentation. Love at first sight was utterly absent in this novel and also there was no presence of illicit love. Jane Austen did set a pair of sensible husband and wife while on the other hands, she has exhibited the foolish man with the foolish woman as a suitable match. If we explore the characters of elders such as Mrs. Bennet we could know about her partner's attributes as per she deserved. Mr. Collins did marry with a girl who was not like him rather than different in nature. The characters Jane and Elizabeth did choose their companions according to their personality. From the strong characteristics of love, Jane and Bingley have found themselves as perfect to each other while Darcy and Elizabeth got themselves as more or less similar. But at the beginning of their attraction towards each other was not so good and mixed with prejudice, quarrel and misunderstandings. Jane did misunderstand Darcy because of his proud nature. But as the story progressed, Elizabeth started to know that she was wrong about Darcy and therefore she has accumulated the love feelings towards him and eventually they got married. Through this successful marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth, Austen tried to prove the good and positive sides of marriage in the society.

. Different character's love and marriage experiences throughout the Novel *Pride and Prejudice*

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's eldest daughter was Jane. Among the four daughters of Bennets, Jane was the most calm and sensible type of girl. She was pretty enough to attract any man towards her and in this way Mr. Bingley got ensnared in her love. They both met at the ball for the first time. They both were attracted to one another from that time. Even after the ball Jane discussed about Bingley to Elizabeth.

"When Jane and Elizabeth were alone, the former, who had been cautious in her praise of Mr. Bingley

before, expressed to her sister how very much she admired him” (Austen, 1970).

Bingley was a kind of modest character and for his life’s decisions he didn’t have any words, liking or disliking from his own. And instead of it he did depend on his sisters opinions. Bingley was actually dependent on his sisters about his commitment with Jane, it seemed how much strong was his attachment to Jane, he did listen to his two sister’s aversion towards Jane and also get negatively influenced by Darcy about Jane. Bingley’s two sisters wanted him to marry with Darcy’s sister as his wife because they thought Darcy’s sister was superior than Jane. Finally, Bingley misunderstood Jane and thought she didn’t love him, so he left her without saying goodbye.

Gradually throughout the novel Bingley came to know about Jane’s innocence and his mistakes about having misunderstanding towards her. After the clarification of all the mistakes, Bingley has gone back to Jane by Darcy’s assistance. This all kinds of doubt, misunderstandings and unfaithfulness happened because of Darcy’s indecisive nature and his dependency on others. While on the other parts, Jane was sensible, sweet and lovable that’s why Bingley got attracted towards Jane and again their love affair have been started.

Darcy and Elizabeth’s love affair was slightly different than others in this novel. They both didn’t like each other in their first meeting at ball. Darcy was manifested as a proud and reserved character towards Jane, while Jane was not so attractive to Darcy that he could fall in love with her. Moreover they were the main protagonists of this novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The love sense of Elizabeth was very essential to perceive that how should a strong minded girl do protect her self-respect compared with any proud and cold hearted guy like Darcy. Elizabeth did understand the intention of Darcy that being a rich and high class man he looked down upon the middle class family girls. In this way, he particularly insulted Elizabeth who was a girl of spirit and witty and the potential heroine of this novel. For Elizabeth’s love and sincerity was very much important. And with time Darcy began to understand Elizabeth’s potentiality and started to admire her. In another scene, Mr. Collins proposed Elizabeth for marriage but Elizabeth refused his marriage proposal. According to her ideologies love is the most important thing of marriage. She remarked that she had no love feelings towards Mr. Collins therefore she can’t accept this marriage proposal. After the death of Mr. Bennet, Mr. Collins was the person who got the entire estate as inherently. Hence after rejecting the proposal of Collins she has lost the future heir to the estate and the wealth. For getting attached with Darcy she had no wish as we have seen from the beginning. She thought Darcy was a

extreme proud, arrogant and a person with stone heart. But as they attempted to know each other closely, Elizabeth’s prejudice about Darcy was removing. While in Darcy’s part, he saw his disadvantages in himself, and finally they fell in love with each other. This love was based on their honesty and truth, that’s why after so much troubles and suffering they were became two body, one soul lovers and the worthy life partners. Collins and Charlotte’s marriage was dependent on economic stability. In the novel, the homely and simple girl Charlotte decided to marry Collins, for a comfortable shelter, a higher position in society and as well as she thought she could be the owner of her husband’s wealth and property. She once explained to Jane about her intention, wish and the reality of life.

“I am not romantic, you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people state” (Austen, 1970).

The character Mr. Collins, was a man who didn’t even know what love is in true sense, though he proposed Elizabeth for the first time after thinking that as he now got the ownership of Mr. Bennet’s property then it would be her grim duty to marry one of his daughters. But Elizabeth firmly rejected him. Soon after get rejected, Mr. Collins transferred his affections to Elizabeth’s best friend Charlotte Lucas who was homely type of girl and did accept his proposal of marriage immediately. Collins had no particular love affections towards Lucas, he did decide to marry her only to get a wife who will be with him and help him as his partner.

Lydia and Wickham were a kind of spoiled characters, as we have seen in the novel that Lydia was the third daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Bennet. She was a girl of smug and possessed an arrogant traits. Her behaviour was somewhat superficial. Wickham, on the other hand was famous for his attractive looks, and strong physical strength. For him love is fun and only for having enjoyment but not carrying any serious deal. As Lydia was also a frivolous girl that’s why she got ensnared in Wickham’s spurious love. When their love didn’t get approval from the parents they both eloped and did hide in another place from everyone. After hearing this news Elizabeth felt and believed that this love will not last forever as she knew Wickham didn’t love Lydia truly, he only loved her because of the wealth of her family.

Marriage seems to be the important social status in Jane Austen’s time

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” (Gillie, 2005).

After reading these phenomenal words of Austen, we could easily understand the importance of marriage, how much the issue of marriage occupied a central place in women's life in Austen's time. Towards Austen love means not to fall for anyone so deeply and blindly, rather love means rational and sensible activities between the two honest persons. If anyone deceive or betray the another means that false heart will never able to get true love. True love is much more exotic, heavenly and cherishing than money and social position. On the basis of her doctrine regarding love, Austen did emphasis on logical love through the character Elizabeth. She was a loyal follower of her own instinct. She also encouraged Jane to chase her true love towards Bingley. Elizabeth also showed her disagreement of Caroline's exaggerated flatteries of Darcy in order to marry a gentleman of high social position and great wealth. The another example of Elizabeth's unique thoughts appeared to us when we saw that she did refuse the marriage proposal of Mr. Collins without any hesitation because she knew that he doesn't love her but wanted to marry her only to make her as his wife. Jane Austen has been portrayed the character of Elizabeth according to her own attributes as Elizabeth has exposed everything that Austen wanted to expressed. Personally Austen believed that a happy marriage is possible upon the mutual understanding, honesty and pure love for each other. Likewise the character Elizabeth also had the same thinking and feelings regarding love and marriage issues. As a result it has been proved that true love and happy marriage will not possible by the first sight of appearance and impression. Happy marriage and pure love needs time to make it stronger. However, Elizabeth and Darcy actually showed the example of true love and successful marriage in this novel. Elizabeth adored about the purity in love but she didn't show disagreement about the needs of money, rather than she confessed that true love happened through happy marriage. She said money or wealth actually, should be the guarantee for a girl, as the marriage will be shattered without the guarantee of money, and no matter how true the love is. Its to be noted that, When a couple could not afford an easy life, their marriage will easily fall apart. The both group of women and men of 21st century feels that they are equal with one another. Especially the group of women thinks that they could control their own future and they don't have any need to depend on any wealthy and high status man. Therefore they don't agree to place themselves as inferior than a man. These all are the thoughts and ideologies of modern women but when the issue of marriage will come they should remember about Jane Austen and Elizabeth's doctrine of marriage, that a successful marriage will only be possible if there is

the touch of true love and the guarantee of minimum kind of wealth.

III. CONCLUSION

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen has been elucidated about the reality of marriage in her time. How the theme of love and marriage was connected to each other. If the love is not true then a successful marriage will not possible what we did see through the strong love sense of Elizabeth and her actual contemplation of marriage. In this same way Austen also thought that love need to be pure to take it towards marriage, and therefore, made her character Elizabeth as her shadow. In 19th century, in Britain, women were obsessed with a opulent marriage system, for their safety, betterment and comfortable future, they wanted to search any rich and handsome man as their partner. This concept has been broken in front of the character Elizabeth. She only wished and as well as proved a marriage full with love and honesty. Through the companionship with Darcy, Elizabeth finally made her dream as reality an they both lived happily together forever.

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