

Women Empowerment in *Pride and Prejudice*

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Abstract

From the time immemorial till now, women were scrutinized by the society and it is a pragmatic truth. The society never attempts to reconstruct its inculcation of pessimistic attitude in women. Women tussled to the great extent in order to achieve their goals. Struggling and striving turn to be the predestined phase in the life of every women. Women are the most suppressed creatures, fabricated with inept constituents. Patriarchal society prompts to be the paramount source of subduing women. Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" entwines both the enthralling circumspections and prevailing prejudices to women. Characterization in this novel acts as a casement through which one can peeps out to encounter the subjugation and servitude of women. It depicts the diverse images of women. This novel illustrates manifestly the image of women as a discriminated, impotent and at last accredited women.

Keywords: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Patriarchal Society, Pragmatic Truth, Self-Realization, Impotence, Emancipation

"It is the truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife". (p. 1)

In the commencement of the Novel, Jane Austen conferred the discriminative criteria in accomplishing the Marital opportunity. The novel begins with this pragmatic truth. Being wealthy and prosperous is adequate for a man to become an appropriate user of the marital opportunity. opulence and affluence are the only norms in the qualitative analysis of parents in selecting ideal partner for their daughters. Impotence of the women is portrayed evidently by Austen. Women are prone to impoverishment when they didn't marry a man who is rich enough to meet all her needs. So, women have to rely on men to satisfy their basic requisites. Dependency is the provenance of Slavery. This constraint of the society results in the curtailment of women's freedom. Austen also delineates the stipulation for women to acquire recognition from the appropriate user of the marital opportunity as follows:

"A Women must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word" and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved. "All this she must possess," "and to all

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this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.” (p. 33)

To secure and clench the crown labelled “ACCOMPLISHED WOMEN” , women must be enhanced with the above mentioned competencies, then only she can achieve the title “ACCOMPLISHED WOMEN”. This is Darcy’s expectation about how a women should be. Women’s Freedom is cramped by their parents more than men. Men need efficacious women who has dynamic views about every distinctive fields. Her parents wanted her to marry a wealthy man. So, women face a major decision-making problem in selecting their suitable partner. On the other side, the prominent determiners of men’s status is their prosperity and aristocracy, but to become even an accomplished woman, women must possess all these calibres. Men may think their wife should be unique so that they are esteemed by the society. This inequal and biased condition is also referred by John Stuart Mill in his essay, “Subjection of women”.

I believe they are afraid, not lest women should be unwilling to marry . . . but lest I they should insist that marriage should be on equal conditions. (SW, 52)

So, Jane portrays the “IMAGE OF DISCRIMINATED WOMEN” by focusing her perceptions about the patriarchal society in her novel.

Self-realization is the most indispensable part of the novel, and it is portrayed by Austen as follows:

“Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.” (p. 180)

Here, Jane reveals another notion about the domination of women. Women are tyrannized. She has not given the authority to prefer and neglect anything. Women should comply with what is preferred by others. She must be content with what is preferred to her by others. Women’s suppression is a tradition from the past. It is witnessed through R. K. Narayan’s “The Dark Room”,

“This is what allowing too much liberty to Women; they ought to be kept under proper control, and then all would be well”. (DR 125)

She mislaid herself by undertaking what is given to her. She never gets the opportunity to take decisions by her own. She is always guided by her superiors. It is another sort of slavery. Her every pace in her life’s phase is contemplated by others. She loses herself by adapting what is suggested to her by others. Loss of individuality is one of the greatest problems that women encountered today. Adaptation is good when it is endured for

short period of time and when it's consequence is optimistic. But at the same time, it turns to be the source of oppression when it is abiding. Upshots of this adaptation is Ignorance. "I never knew myself" is a self-explanatory sentence. And it is the trace of oppression. When the women identify her ignorance it is the realization phase of her life. Any situation in a woman's life may turn out to be an eye opener and made her to realize her oppression and slavery. Every girl awaits for that situation. But self-realization takes part in a different way in the life of a man. When it is experienced by him, he shrieked like this,

"I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was right, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son (for many years an only child), I was spoilt by my parents, who, though good themselves (my father, particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable), allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing; to care for none beyond my own family circle." (p. 1)

Man realizes his mistakes and short comings only when he acknowledges the fact that social status is not so prominent and necessary than person's manner. Authentic happiness relies on genuine love towards others, and it does not lie in social status. Self-realization is experienced by men and women in dissimilar ways, women perceives the shackles around her and attempts to get out of that shackles through self-realization, but men perceives the effects being selfish through the same tactic. Women have to struggle and strives a lot to vanish her ignorance. It doesn't affect others, it shows its drastic effect on women. But the thing which makes the happiness invisible to men is harmful not to him, but to the people surrounds him. Through this, Jane depicts the "IMAGE OF CONJUGATED WOMEN".

Marriage is expounded as an adorned trap for women in the Novel "Pride and Prejudice" as follows:

"Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other or ever so similar beforehand, it does not advance their felicity in the least. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life." (p. 6)

In this, Jane portrays through the character of Charlotte Lucas, and her pragmatic view about Marriage. Marriage is an inevitable slavery in the name of ceremony that every women must pass through in her life. According to women, Happiness is a matter of chance in their conjugal life. Marriage is the amalgamation of genuine understanding and unadulterated love. This is the conventional belief. But for women it is invalid as usual. If the temperaments of women are known by them, it is only least blissful. Women are not allowed to express their true feelings, she must pretend to please others. She have to ignore all her dreams and have to endure all the pain and agony and work hard for the enhancement

of the family. Women have to work like a wife, she must not live like wife. If she expresses her feelings and emotions, it will be the most unalterable defect in her life. But women have to know the deficiency of men and she must behave as per his deficiency. Woman must not expect any calibre or any sort of happiness from her husband but she must behave likely satisfy others needs. This marital injustice is also described by John Stuart Mill,

Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it is intended should be sought by all of them, except those who are too little attractive to be chosen by any man as his companion; one might have supposed that everything would have been done to make this condition as eligible to them as possible, that they might have no cause to regret being denied the option of any other. - (SW, 54)

Women are chosen by men according to their attractiveness and enticement. They are just like a object that can be chosen by anyone as their companion. As men have certain criteria in selecting women, women do not have any norms in selecting her life partner. Marriage act as a destination for women. They have to prepare themselves to achieve that destination. The vulnerability of women after marriage is clearly exposed by R.K. Narayan in his Novel, "The Dark Room" as follows:

"How impotent she was, she thought; she had not the slightest power to do anything at home, and that after fifteen years of married life." (DR, 6)

The sufferings and pain that women undertook cannot be translated in words. asking permissions and accepting terms and conditions for doing paltry things is the most difficult task in the world. Women are subjected to that again and again.

In spite of all this gloom-ridden perception, Jane enlightens the glory of women in this Novel. Women can recast even the stern personality and it is evidenced in the Novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Darcy, after considering only the attractiveness of Elizabeth, he states: "She is tolerable; but no handsome enough to tempt me:" (p. 9)

Darcy made this statement when he is intimated by Bingley to dance with Elizabeth. He only saw women as an object of attractiveness. And that is clear when he utters his refusal. But later, after his self-realization phase and revelation of Elizabeth's wittiness and shrewdness, he transfigures his statement as follows:

"You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." (p. 163)

A woman can do anything. Knowledge and wisdom add more beauty to women. Knowledge is a conflagration which destroys the pessimistic approaches of patriarchal society. So Jane proudly portrays the IMAGE OF DYNAMIC WOMEN, through the character of Darcy.

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