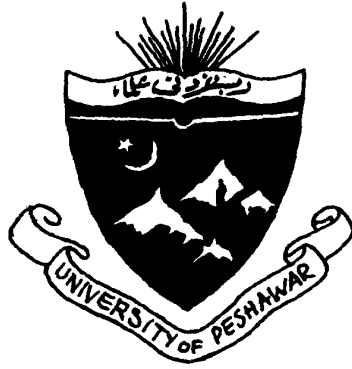


**Jane Austen's Novels:
A Narrative of Ethical, Social, and Sexual Power Politics**



By

SAMINA ASHFAQ

PhD Research Scholar

Supervised by

Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst)

Submitted to the Department of English & Applied Linguistics, University of Peshawar
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in English Language & Literature
Department of English & Applied Linguistics University of Peshawar.

© 2012

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, “Jane Austen’s Novel: The Narrative of Ethical, Social, and Sexual Power Politics,” has been approved as a partial fulfillment towards the degree of PhD in English Language and Literature.

External Examiner

Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst)

Supervisor & Internal Examiner

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation titled, “Jane Austen’s Novels: The Narrative of Ethical, Social, and Sexual Power Politics,” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst). I also declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree elsewhere.

Samina Ashfaq

Supervisor's Certificate

This is to certify that the work in this dissertation titled, “Jane Austen’s Novels: The Narrative of Ethical, Social, and Sexual Power Politics,” has been carried out in my supervision by Samina Ashfaq for submission in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language and Literature.

Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst)

To my family

Acknowledgement

I want to express my gratitude to all those who have been partners in this academic sojourn—people who have actively participated in my endeavours to finish this work successfully. My friends, colleagues, in and outside the college and the university would ask me every now and then when I would finish. I told them a few days back that I was over with it. I want to thank them for their help, happiness, and concern. Dr Ghazala Nizam, who invariably asked me each time I ran into her in and outside the college, how my work was faring. She was genuinely concerned that I finish my work soon. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Simin Masud who encouraged me to pursue my PhD. I wish she were around to see my work. I also want to thank Dr Zahid Ali Shah and Dr Ismail Wali for their support and guidance. They promptly agreed to go through the earlier drafts of my work when I requested them to help with the focus that I thought was lacking in my writing. My thanks are due to Dr Shazia Babar for the fruitful discussions we had on different issues that I was dealing with. Her insightful comments made it easier for me to see through some of the ambiguities in my writing and argument. I would like to express my gratitude to the HEC for providing students with the facility of the digital library. Accessing a variety of sources for my work would not have been possible without the digital library. I want to say my thanks to Zaiwar Khan, librarian at the Dept of English & Applied Linguistics, University of Peshawar, who was kind enough to identify and locate different books for my work. I also want to thank the Department staff and faculty for their support and kindness. My family, without whose support I would not have undertaken this work, stood by me through the ordeal of writing, re-writing, and revising what I had done. I want to say “thank you” to Ashfaq for all that he did and will continue. I would not have done it without him.

My daughters who were kind enough to cook for me and do other chores so mum could have the extra time to finish the work. My father, who always supported me through life and urged me to pursue my higher studies, stood by me spiritually through this work. I wish he were around to see that I successfully completed my work. I want to thank my advisor, Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst), for his guidance, comments, and discussions. He sat with me for hours to go through different parts of my dissertation. I also thank him for his trust in my ability to handle this mammoth task, and let myself out of any confusion, ambiguity or problem that I would have while writing my dissertation. Last but not least, I am thankful to Allah, the Almighty, for having given me the courage and the patience to live through the ordeal of the coursework and then the numerous revisions that my writing went through.

Abstract

Jane Austen's Novels: The Narrative of Ethical, Social, and Sexual Power Politics

February 2012

MA, University of Peshawar

PhD, University of Peshawar

Directed by: Nasir Jamal Khattak, PhD (Amherst)

Most of Jane Austen's novels, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, make readers conscious of the realities of life in an entertaining way. We relate to the experiences of the characters and laugh with them in their moments of absurdities and weaknesses. Their follies and hypocrisies, their worries and sorrows, their limitations and compromises with society and others reflect us and our traits. We see these characters move around us even today. In struggle for survival and living a desirable life, some succumb to the pressures of the social, ethical, and sexual politics. Such people choose on the standards of what the society considers "appropriate," "desirable," and "practical." While others deviate from the social norm. And while they apparently make life difficult for themselves, they end up having a better and productive life. Such is the irony of life. All live it; some with pain and misery in it; others with peace of mind and happiness in it.

Pride and Prejudice shows how with the passage of time societies and their denizens undergo a change, but that there are some who are too rigid to keep pace with the changing times. This behaviour on part of these characters makes them the butt of the laughter of others. However, there are others, who through their intelligence and consciousness adjust themselves to the changing times. The problems that her characters confront are our problems and so we live in the novel with them. Like her characters we too are self-centered, proud, and conscious of our persona with such extremity that we forget the existence of others. Wrapped up in the pursuit of

our desires we trespass the rights of others without any regard for them. In the struggle for “desirable” survival, the characters indulge themselves in social, ethical and sexual dilemmas which are part and parcel of human existence irrespective of time and place. Instead of looking at their partners as their extension, most of the Austen’s characters “otherize” their relatives, friends, and partners.

Some of Austen’s characters learn from life as they experience different ups and downs due to the choices they make in their lives. Others continue to perpetuate the misery that has become their lot due to the compromises they have made. The likes of Elizabeths and Darcys have numerous problems in the beginning to find their soul mate. Once they find one, the remaining part of their life is productive, peaceful, and prosperous. They go through the mill of power, social, and sexual politics of their society but emerge successful and choose wisely. The others, like the Collins and Charlottes, choose their partners on the prevailing standards of their society. The duality in their beliefs and deeds undo them and their life. They opt for a short cut in making choices for themselves and end up in a life which is full of challenges, boredom, and indifference to the well being of each other. Both these kind of life come with their prices and consequences.

CONTENTS

	Page #
Acknowledgements	vi
Abstract	viii
Introduction	1
Notes.....	22
Chapter One	
The Drama of Ethics	25
Notes.....	55
Chapter Two	
Threadbare Morality and the Challenges of the New World	62
Notes.....	102
Chapter Three	
The Unregulated Regulations	105
Notes.....	147
Chapter Four	
Sexual Power Politics	156
Notes.....	194
Conclusion	200
Bibliography	210

Introduction

All Jane Austen's novels are a source of "a joy forever"¹ due to their universal appeal, subtle irony, humour, and generous sympathy for the follies and limitations of her characters. We, as readers, relate to her characters; sympathize with them; and feel akin to them. Darcy, Elizabeth, Fanny, Collins, Edward, and Elliot are some of those characters whom we find around us almost all the time. We can say the same about those characters as well whom we traditionally call villains. All these characters earn our sympathy due to Austen's generous treatment of them. We like them for their wonderful qualities, but it never reaches idolization. In the same manner we dislike the latter for their follies but the dislike never borders disgust or hate. The characters in *Pride and Prejudice*² are "human beings in the same category as we find ourselves" and are "social enough"³ too.

Austen's society and its moral world have their strings in the past. It may not be inappropriate to have a cursory look at the past of Austen's age; doing that would help us see her work in a better perspective. I trace the seeds of Austen's time to Elizabeth's accession to the throne of England that marks the turning point in the history of England. It seemed as if the society was ready to explode with a certain pent up energy that required an urgent outlet and the young Queen was most cooperative in this regard. Her era was "alight with youth, charged with growth, expansion, and patriotic faith" (Legouis 101). The Queen with her Justices of Peace and their implementation of Elizabeth's Reformation Policy left an everlasting effect on the future of England. This era is remarkable in bringing not only political changes but social ones too. The Queen's encouragement of art, literature, oversea enterprises not only brought prosperity and

fame to the country but also redefined social and religious attitude of the people which “evades dogma and lives broadly in spirit” (Legouis 188). Education spread at a breathless pace because “Elizabeth, who was herself a lover of learning” (Sampson 141) promoted education at Oxford and Cambridge through the Act of Incorporation. Later on great efforts were made to restore the grammar schools” (Sampson 141). In the Sixteenth Century Richard Mulcaster, a great educationist made great effort to provide “education for all and the best education for the best” (Sampson 142). However, the “transition from the medieval scholastic view of education to the humanistic view was not rapid” (Sampson 330). Almost three centuries in existence and then developed too, William Caxton’s printing press in 1476 made reading material abundantly available to the Eighteenth Century reader, though a small step towards communication, it generated a huge movement which played cataclysm with the old social order and the social system based on power of landed gentry.

With the spread in education, the proverbial common man had available to him what was exclusively the domain of the privileged class. The common man could opt to join state or private seafaring expeditions. Those with little capital fared well in trade and industry, brought wealth and fame and rose high in social status by the sheer acquisition of this wealth. Those who had nothing then had what they always wanted—money. They could indulge themselves in social activities which were previously part and parcel of the life of the rich. The nobles and landowners of earlier times did not allow these novices space in their social circle; they looked down upon the new class. The latter somehow took pride in imitating and following the former.

The practice of imitation continued in the realm of writing too. The ancient classicists were considered the epitome of perfection in literature, and the Eighteenth Century writers made sure they followed the classics. An increasingly large number of writers consciously followed

the old classical Greek and Latin writers. These people were against the unrestrained literature of the Elizabethan times. This is true about prose in which there was “the tendency to an unduly labored vocabulary, that to an unduly Latinised syntax, and that to enormously long sentences” (Saintsbury 448). Scott-James calls it an “age steeped in the grammar of criticism” (138). Through satires the poetry and prose writers started criticizing the social institutions of the time. Like the writers the Eighteenth Century people followed what the upper class did in their social circles. The general idea as reflected in literature was not only “seriousness and decency but also instruction and information...less to introduce new ideas to the mankind, than to establish some practical rule of conduct” (Logouis 198). Dryden, Pope, Steele, Addison, Swift, Fielding belong to this age. The society was going through a remarkable social change; a new culture, so to say, was in the offing. Smith and Preston put it more appropriately. They say that social changes occur when the institutions change with a “significant shift in the material and nonmaterial culture of a society” (283). Mercer and Wanderer also believe that “alteration in cultural values ...bring about new patterns of interaction” (Mercer, Wanderer 478) ¹ among the people. As such we see a sharp influence of the French on the lives of the English intellectuals which Daiches considers a “hedonistic liveliness at court” (538). The English interacted with more people and new cultures than they ever did before. The society was opening up to new ideas and new practices. The result was that the people preferred the rejection of the severe moral laws to free expression and of “formation of character as the chief object to be attained” (Logouis 176). Excess of everything is undesirable and hence the excessive stress on form and manner resulted

¹ Christopher Bates Doob also believes that “Social change involves any modifications in culture, social organizations, and social behaviour” and later says that “the focus of social change is alterations that take place within institutions or societies”(504). *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: CBS College Publishing 1985)

in bringing about an artificiality of sorts not only in literature but also in the lives of the people. Conduct books for females and books on observance of perfect manners for men came in the market. The general belief and behaviour of the nobility reflected that “status is value-laden” (Duckworth 117).²

The idea of moral education that began in Cromwell’s time was slowly replaced by the public spirit of the restoration. However the reserve in matters of expression of emotions remained especially among those who attended college. Poets like Dryden felt “ashamed to allow himself a visible excess of emotions” (Simpson 342). With the publications of journals and periodicals more and more people took interest in reading and being acquainted with modern changing trends of the time. It was mostly due to these publications that other forms of literature were introduced. The chief among them is the novel—a new reading public was getting ready. Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* attracted attention and readership. There developed a certain tolerance between religion and politics and the changes in the social life were slowly accepted.

The Eighteenth Century is reputed for the great men who were born in this age and who left an everlasting effect on the society of England. They brought about a change in all the fields of life by focusing on the ‘individual’. Writers like Addison and Steele focus on “bridg[ing] the gap between town and country” (Daiches, 593). There was a general interest in the individual and the society. This century witnesses the development of English literature. There developed what Saintsbury calls “the graver prose” which refers to “political philosophy” and “philosophy proper” as Saintsbury puts it (622). The printing of periodicals, reviews, journals, and their large

² The term appears in Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the State: A Study of Jane Austen’s Novels* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1971)

circulation (courtesy William Caxton printing press some three centuries back) brought philosophical discussions within the household of the interested reader. This led to the simplicity of style and language for the better understanding of the common man; prose did not resemble the writing of the University Wits anymore. The emphasis was on employing the “speech of the country people, freed of its dialect and its grammatical mistakes” (Legouis 279).³

Austen was born in the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century; she grew up in the social cataclysm with which her age was ripe. In addition to the Eighteenth Century writers mentioned above, the works of writers like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Byron, Shelly, Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth were part of the household libraries. Writers and thinkers like Rousseau, Hegel, Kant, Goethe, Hume, Crabbe, Godwin had their share of influence on the mind of the people of the Austen’s times. In this scenario a new social atmosphere began to emerge. The new ideas regarding man and his position on earth generated a lot of discussion and arguments. The writings of some of these writers became very popular due to the simplicity of their style and content. Common men and women read their works and wrote on them.

The idea of man as an individual was hailed by the romantics; events were now important due to their impact on the life of the individual. The perspective of the writers and as such of the Eighteenth Century people underwent a significant shift—individual was more important. Man and his relationship with the others around him became a serious matter as it influenced his

³ This comment comes close to what Wordsworth said in his *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* though in his words he says that he decided to choose the “humble and rustic life” because “manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings” that are “more easily comprehended...The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because... they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions” (Wordsworth 164)

dealings with the society in general. And this shift marks what social historians call the “humanitarian Spirit” (Trevelyan 378).

The Eighteenth Century England witnessed many political events which also affected their social life. The declaration of France as a Republic brought Britain to war with France which influenced the economy of the country. Pitt’s introduction of taxes also affected the age long status of the landed gentry. Some gained while others lost during this era. Men who took part in wars and other private exploits became rich to the extent of becoming social and financial equals of the landed gentry—the privileged class. Furthermore the Industrial Revolution and the Agricultural Reforms resulted in a new era of wealth and improvement of life standard and style. The landed gentry who invested their interest and money in their agricultural products made improvements in their lands and yield. And those who did not take any interest in the improvement of their lands suffered impoverishment reflected in the novels of Jane Austen by characters like Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Mr. Elliot in *Persuasion*.

As stated earlier education was now available to all who were interested. People were able to understand what the intellectuals wanted to convey and a sort of consciousness of self-realization was on its way. Class differences remained but the boundaries which divided different classes had started to blur with the ideas related to “individual initiative and institutional decay” (Trevelyan 354). It was the age in which one finds “a generation of men wholly characteristic of the Eighteenth Century ethos, a society with a mental outlook of its own, self poised, self-judged, and self-approved, freed from the disturbing passions of the past, and not yet troubled with anxieties about a very different future” (Trevelyan 354). Advancement in the field of science and medicine helped prolong healthy life. This resulted in the trust of masses towards the new ideals and innovations. Enlightenment encouraged common men and women as

they shared the knowledge which was earlier reserved for the elite. Conservatism and strict rules of life mellowed down. With the preference of the rule of law over the will of the ruler “with all its grave faults, was at least the law of freedom”. The laws henceforth were made in accordance with the “common-sense, utilitarian principles” (Trevelyan 366). Religion and science started co-existing through the efforts and explanations of the intellectuals while earlier science had to fight a tough battle to prove its worth as strong opposition came from the church. The “charity schools and the Wesleyan mission were striving to raise out of ignorance to the mental level of understanding Christians” (Trevelyan 370, 71) with stress on “spirit of tolerance” and “reasonableness in the interpretation of religious doctrines, without which they were unlikely to be received by the more scientific modern mind” (Trevelyan 371), thus bridging up the gap between science and religion.

The spirit of tolerance “driven forward by its own momentum” (Trevelyan 371) helped man understand the others. Rousseau’s claim that man is born free was welcomed by many for it hailed freedom of an individual. Hegel’s philosophy of “self” was eagerly welcomed by the romantics and hence the poetry of Eighteenth Century hails freedom of individual and celebration of the self. The main concern of novelists and other writers was focused on the individual’s relationship with the society as well as the self-realization of the individual. The simplicity of language helped inculcate in the masses ideas related to understanding of the others.

Fielding’s *Tom Jones* presents a close picture of the then society. We come to learn how religious and modern views existed side by side. Squire Allworthy has two tutors for his protégés, Blifil and Tom, with opposing views. Yet they exist without coming into clash. There were those who would become parsons because living in a rectory was considered financially

comfortable. Hence the clergy enjoyed a snug place among the noblemen. The rectory was considered beneficial for the second sons of the landed gentry too whose state was entailed. These learned sons became more tolerant through their college education under the guidance of the intellectuals e.g. Edward Bertram in Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*. With the agricultural reforms the property attached to the rectory brought an era of further improvement. Roads were repaired and communication boosted the country's economy by supplying necessities at low cost. In short, as Trevelyan says "In many respects it was a free-and-easy society" (Trevelyan 419). Yet the old land owners, though on the road to discovery of the "self" found it difficult to adjust with the upstarts though time was changing. The tension that existed "between spontaneity and convention and between the claims of personal morality and those of economic and social propriety" (Daiches 744) is apparent in Austen's novels. And this is one of the most common themes of the Austen novels, especially of *Pride and Prejudice*.⁴

Some readers do not read P & P as sympathetically as others. They find faults with the limited range or lack of excitement and glamour in its world. Others, however, marvel at the way the plot is engineered within a limited range and it manages to retain the interest of the readers. Even Austen compares her work to a "two inches of ivory",⁴ but we must not underestimate her humble claim for it is a delicately wrought world, containing the beauty and delicacy of feelings, values, morals and ethics. The miniature portrait is a world in itself and Austen exercises extreme caution in its creation. The "3 or 4 families in a country village" is where she feels comfortable for the depiction of "the good, the enthusiastic, the literary;" she

⁴ From page 1 to page 8 gives the historical background and has less of my contribution.

humbly states to “know nothing” else.⁵ Once when she was asked by James Stanier Clark, domestic Chaplain to the Prince of Wales, to “delineate in some future work the habits of life, and character, and enthusiasm of a clergyman, who should pass his time between the metropolis and the country” (letter ii), Ms. Austen politely excused herself from the task for it was out of the social boundary that she had set for herself and which she strictly followed. She states:

I am quite honored by your thinking me capable of drawing such a clergyman as you gave the sketch of in your note of Nov. 16th. But I assure you I am *not*. The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. Such a man’s conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing; or at least be occasionally abundant in quotations and allusions which a woman who, like me, knows only her own mother-tongue, and has read little in that, would be totally without the power of giving. A classical education, or at any rate a very extensive acquaintance with English literature, ancient and modern, appears to me quite indispensable for the person who would do any justice to your clergyman; and I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress (letter iii).

Her “little bit (two inches wide) of ivory” is a microcosm formed consciously to ensure maximum attention to all who fall within that range. The world that she depicts in *P & P*, might be small in stature, but it contains a wealth of knowledge about her society’s morals and ethics as well as the dynamics of human relationships.⁶ This is why her multidimensional work is still a source of interest for today’s readers. Yet a critic may find her work “traditional in style and traditional also in theme ...: whom should the heroine marry” (Massie 25)? Critics differ in their opinions regarding Austen’s art. Some believe that her world is limited; others, however, opine that Austen deals with the limited view of life that people have.⁷ Even if we tend to pay attention to these views, we are led to wonder how a writer with limitations suddenly rejects all the restrictions applied to her art and expands her characters. She portrays them in such a way, that

even the most rigid of her critics, Garrod, agrees that her minor characters are the “best characters” and that he “feels happy” with Elizabeth (37).

P & P is a story of a few families where apparently the atmosphere of calm and beauty rules unperturbed by violence. However, it depicts a world of living men and women who go through the experience of life’s oddities and complexities. According to Charlotte Bronte, it is a “carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers” with “no fresh air, no blue hills, no bony back,” but she still considers Austen a “most sensible lady.”⁸ She considers Ms Austen incapable of depicting something that sweeps one off one’s feet. She further says that Ms Austen “ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her” (Bronte 7).

Miss Bronte, I think, fails to understand that Ms Austen avoids dwelling on the harsh realities of life deliberately. Passionate emotions result in a passionate outcome, especially when one is blinded by the intensity of emotions that can be harmful to the person involved; one is likely to make mistakes in a situation like this. Her characters do not fight with the forces of the nature like other passionate writers of the times, as those of Miss Emily Bronte’s; Ms Austen’s characters are common people with mildly exciting emotions. There is hardly any romantic scene in which the characters are involved; the ladies are courted without any physical contact. There are balls at best. Love, in Ms Austen’s world is more of an intellectual entity than a physical exhibition. Romance in her world is more a commitment than a show of emotions or a physical activity. Her persistence in remaining within her domain has no match; she manages to conform “more closely to real life”⁹ (Whately 5).

Ms Austen’s contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, calls her characters a product of “spirit and originality”(193) and further appreciates by stating that the “young lady had a talent for

describing the involvement and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with”(135)¹⁰, which is why one remembers Darcy, Elizabeth, and even Collins, as intimately as if they were one’s neighbours; they demonstrate qualities of those people whom we meet in our daily life. Thomas Babington Macaulay goes so far as to consider Ms Austen nearest to Shakespeare¹¹ while Kaplan believes that Austen picks up from there where Shakespeare leave off when she makes fun of old conventions. In *P & P* we see how the characters suffer due to the cruelty of conventions and how they are fed up with them to a point where they defy these conventions openly. Charlotte Lucas marries Collins because she wants to keep within the conventions and furthermore to be socially acceptable because she is afraid of “dying an old maid” (117). Lydia elopes with Wickham because she wants to have fun—something she cannot do if she follows the conventions of her society. Lydia is dissatisfied with life in her society; her elopement ensures that she avoids the lot of Charlotte.

There have been critics who have criticized Ms Austen’s attitude towards morality and ethics. Ralph W. Emerson declares her “vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention. Never was life so pinched and narrow... Suicide is more respectable.”¹² Mr. Emerson, I feel, is too hasty in his judgment and fails to appreciate that with so conventional a subject as marriage Ms Austen brings forth related moral issues like avarice, ambitions, and personal desires of men and women. Her scale of “two inches of ivory” is a delicately wrought world, containing the beauty and delicacy of feelings and her trust in the basic goodness of men and women.¹³ Its small but intricate pattern is the story of life; it is a microcosm where she reveals her genius. Emerson, himself a staunch advocate of human independence, misses the underlying theme of her novels, i.e., independence from self-deception and the false conventions of the society. Emerson also, seems to ignore that Austen treats all her characters with equal amount of humanity. Even her

clergymen, whom people expect to possess faultless ethics and saintly morals, are created with a lot of sympathy, imaginative excellence and generosity of heart. They are part of the society and are liable to err; hence their values and beliefs reflect the general environment. No matter how much idiosyncratic in their behavior they are accepted in the social fold without conflicting harshness. As such they are an integral part of their society; even Mr. Collins' harshness is ignored. Being a product of a lively imagination the other clergymen easily manage to accommodate in the world they live in. They are both professed Christians and professional men.

Contrary to Emerson, the modern critics highlight the consciousness of her characters when they begin "to value virtue over vanity, cultural and class diversity over conformity... to be free from the narrow confines of the ignorant mind [which] is ultimately Austen's powerful message."¹⁴ Austen points to the tip of the iceberg and leaves the rest of the iceberg to her reader to explore. She finds mountains under molehills and wants her readers to discover theirs. Dom Nicholas Seymour delivers a very interesting lecture about her clergymen and is amused as well as appreciative at the treatment of Ms Austen's characters. He says:

It would seem that Jane Austen's clergymen fit into the overall moral world of her novels as men first and clergymen second: they are not seen as "examples" of clergymen for study as such. They are, largely speaking, socially presentable members of a well-defined social group.... I feel that her clergymen are in her moral universe as moral beings - that is, capable of growth or decay: they are products (as she often says of her creations) of their experiences - witness her frequent link between a lack of early education and a later lack of social poise - and their clerical life is part of what they are (Seymour). ¹⁵

To study her clergymen or other characters for that matter one must see them as a part of the world that she portrays. They all go through a process of change for the better. Only Mr. Collins remains the same ignorant, pompous person because of his lack of early education. Perhaps his father who had quarreled with Mr. Bennet did not take care of his moral brought up.

Austen always leaves explanation and reasons of personality disorder because of her unlimited sympathy towards humans. Mr. Elton, a clergyman in *Emma*, aspires for pecuniary advantages and prefers them over simple living. This is why he wants to marry the rich Emma rather than the poor Harriet. His greed is fulfilled but at the cost of becoming hostage to the vanity of a proud woman. Although he does his parish duties quite well, his greed makes him go through a lifelong suffering yet he apparently leads a comfortable life. There are noble clergymen too, like Edmund Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*; Edward Bertram in *Mansfield Park*; Charles Hayter in *Persuasion*, who are conscious of the demands of their profession. They make mistakes but behave decently and realizing their faults, make amendments and live happily. Seymour goes so far as to claim that “From my own religious standpoint, Jane Austen, a great creative artist, is imitating God: in writing a novel, she is making a world and creating men and women to live in that world.”¹⁶

Later critics have almost the same difference of opinion about Austen. Some of these critics consider *P & P* a mere depiction of a superficial society; others criticize the limitations of characters, actions, and subject matter, while yet others consider the world too small. Even though criticism on *P & P* seems to go into the background for sometime but again the interest revives with the beginning of the twentieth century and interestingly this time a significant number of critics move in different directions. They explore new dimensions in this novel.¹⁷

P & P can also be interpreted as one of the first novels that celebrates female freedom. Elizabeth is bold and challenges all those who fail to understand her view of life. She is a rational person who approaches everything logically and rationally. Her quality to question things surprises the traditional people around her. Though living in a society where females were almost confined within doors Elizabeth strives for individuality. She expects to be

respected rather than admired. Darcy is astonished to hear her talk; Lady Catherine de Bourgh is shocked to hear her stance on matters relating to young sisters out without the elders having gotten married, which for Lady de Bourgh, is intolerable. Perhaps this is why Ms. Oliphant envisages a “position of mind” that is “*essentially feminine* [my italics] and one, which may be readily identified in the personal knowledge of most people” (13). Richard Simpson, on the other hand, complains that though the characters are good, yet, “they have in them much of the element of farce” (148). Later in the same essay he appreciates the “delicate reserve, [which is] never insisting, never forcing the note, never pushing the sketch into the caricature” (17-18)!

The twentieth century critics are more sympathetic and generous towards Ms Austen than their earlier counterparts. The modern critics read P & P from new perspectives, and focus on those salient features which were not highlighted previously.¹⁸ The difference of opinions and views, however, persists. Boris Ford is impressed by the subtlety of the portrayal that leads him to state that it “does not simply mirror a society but subtly compasses it into existence” (173); Henry James believes that while reading a novel one should not “think about optimism and pessimism: try and catch the colours of life itself”¹⁹ R. W. Chapman appreciates the “extraordinary attention to exactness of detail.”²⁰ Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, points to something totally different. She appreciates the empathic treatment of characters that convinces us of the authors “special sympathy for the happiness and unhappiness of others”, and praises the refinement of plot and character, admitting that of “all great writers she is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness” (26).²¹

The element of tragedy in its conventional form has no place in P & P. The suffering and conflicts of the characters are private and the turmoil resulting is psychological in nature. Elizabeth and Darcy suffer from lack of self-knowledge but they never discuss their feelings with

the others believing that others will not understand their point of view. They both desire a different type of relationship with their spouses which nobody seems to realize. This leads Edwin Muir to complain that “Jane Austen... consistently avoided and probably was quite incapable of sounding the tragic” (29), which has been traditionally a requirement for all great art (Muir 29).

Later critics and her ardent admirers have been consistently evaluating her work for they find layers of meanings and various dimensions in her novels. Devlin believes that “Austen’s novels are “novels of education” to greater extent than any previous representative of that sub-genre of fiction. But to Kelly her recurrent use of the terms, “feel”, “know” and “think,” shows her occupation with the ideas related to it. New historicists and psychoanalytic critics, however, appreciate her work for what they call the main tool of her art, i.e., irony. In *P & P* the ironic treatment of the absurdities and follies of the characters add to the meaning of the novel. Collins desires to get a wife by marrying one of her cousins but ends up marrying their neighbour’s daughter, Elizabeth denounces Darcy’s proposal by telling him to his face that he “were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry”(P & P, 182), yet in the end she marries him willingly. Laurence Perrine believes that irony is used “to suggest the complexity of experience, to furnish indirectly an evaluation of the material, and at the same time to achieve compression” (Perrine 201).

The most important aspect of 20th century criticism is a negation of all sorts of the accusations leveled against Austen. For the first time we see a perceptible shift from the “limited range” to something universal. Andrew H. Wright believes that Austen is in search “for meaning in the universe” for which he believes Austen uses her irony. He says that irony comes “as the result of human experience; it is not a piece of equipment like an entrenching tool, with which a

man starts out” (36). D. W. Harding points to another important characteristic in the novel, i.e. humour. In *P & P* the society is portrayed without resentment at the beliefs and follies of the characters and there is no “open conflict” with the “friendly people around her.” It seems as though Austen was aware of people’s “eager [ness] to laugh at faults they tolerated in themselves and their friends” (117-118) so she softly laughs with her characters whose follies and foibles were the raw material of her novels.²²

The mid-twentieth century critics also view Ms Austen’s use of irony from a different perspective. They interpret her moral instructions differently. Regarding her irony some critics agree that she is an ironist with moral instruction in view yet it does not bound her art or implies limitations on her characters. W. A. Craik, for example, states, that Austen is a moralist “beyond dispute yet, it is plain that her characters and situations are not primarily vehicles of moral philosophy” (2) while Walter Allen thinks that the “main emphasis in [Ms Austen’s] work is on manners, which she sees as morals in microcosm”(111).

What I find in the comments or assessment of Austen by those who have written voluminous histories of English literature, is that they rank her among the greatest writers and do not consider her work simple though they may not discuss the complexities present in it. They might talk of her restricted world, plot or theme yet they are somehow awestruck at the way she manages to spin her stories so convincingly. It is so, I think, because long after one has gone through her novels one remembers the characters as if they were people one knows intimately and sympathize extensively. “The family dynamics and relationships, thoughts and feelings in *P & P* are as relevant today as two centuries ago” (Ferguson & Eileen 9).

Mary Eagleton and David Pierce appreciate the central concern “with the public role of the gentry and the growing influence of the middle class,” and later state that the awareness of

the change in the social order was an outcome of “the lack of concern with the agricultural labourer” (Eagleton and Pierce 10). Brigid Braphy in his introduction to *P & P* considers the total effect of the novel as “a metaphor of art” and “an ever living monument to the power of imagination” (Daiches 733-34). The plot in *P & P* and the treatment of the subject raises “the whole genre to a new level of art” and the “remarkable insight into the relation between social convention and individual temperament” is very appreciable (Daiches 733-34). This attention towards individual rather than action makes the novel a predecessor of modern literature. This is why Taylor believes that the protagonists are forever busy with self-assessment which finally leads them to the realization of bigger realities of life. They move towards understanding of others around them, and manage to gain knowledge of how far they are responsible for the conflicts that they encounter in their daily lives.

Darcy dislikes the Meryton crowd and considers himself socially superior to it. He is a victim of an inflated persona because of his status. His problem is that he wants to retain the distance between himself and the others. We as readers understand that he is proud because he is socially and intellectually superior to the set of people among whom he lives; we find that Bingley always looks up to him and seeks his approval. When Darcy “refuses to dance with Ladies of Meryton and boasts about his understanding” (Taylor 18), Elizabeth challenges him by refusing to dance with him when caught by an impulse he requests her for a dance. The others cannot understand the reason for her refusal because for them being singled out among the lot is a privilege. She makes him realize that his social superiority is no justification for his snobbish behaviour.

Tony Tanner appreciates the way the author “both expose and criticize the ideological assumptions which may ground her society and which may seem to constrain her fiction,” and

that her stress on propriety has deeper implications. He further writes, “all of Jane Austen’s novels portray a movement towards true seeing and true speaking” (Tanner 6). He complains that there has been “a tendency to privatize her work and to miss the wider implications of seemingly local events” (Tanner 13).

Some critics identify the world of *P & P* as a peep into “the private, the emotional, women’s physical and spiritual landscape” (Sabiston 2), while others argue that in Ms Austen’s novels she “appeals against those biological concepts of womanhood which has now come to disrepute as limiting and patronizing definitions of female identity” (Brown 322). I see her female protagonists pursue their self identity quietly but with as much vigour as their male counterparts. Ann Eliot in *Persuasion* takes ten years to know the strength of her attachment and though she suffers for the lapse of time yet she does not regret it; time has strengthened her belief that true happiness lies in the strength and trial of bond between a man and a woman.

I agree with Ewbank that there can be no “collecting classification of a female novelist;” and that in case of Austen we must appreciate her potential as an artist not as female novelist alone. Every artist is an individual whole in him/herself (16-17). That is why the twentieth century critics find a large variety of common men and women, their social, economic, and psychological problems, eccentricities, desires, values and the craving for influence in *P & P*. All the characters, like living men and women, nurture a desire of being accepted as significant member of the society, which makes them at once individuals as well as representatives of their class. They are after all humans with weaknesses and strengths. Lady Catherine de Bourgh may order around others as to how they should live and behave; yet when her authority is challenged she behaves ridiculously, almost begging Elizabeth, in her effort to stop her from marrying Darcy.

My research focuses on P & P and carefully analyzes the text to show out how basic human instincts betray our beliefs and traditions, and how we resort to hypocrisy, fraud, elopement and even marriage for financial considerations for our personal and social conveniences. Some of the essential questions that arise are: is P & P merely written for a particular society where people are stuck in their personae? Is it a work of a self-conscious artist who wants to share a fresh perspective with the society? Is the writer aware of the social, ethical, and sexual power politics that men and women of her age play? How does the author respond to these politics? Do the bold female protagonists wage a war of self-identity and female freedom against the restrictions and suppressions of their society? Though seemingly indolent and meek, her female characters, whether rich or poor, are active in subtle schemes. Why is there the fear of being left out so dominating in them? Why are morality and religion set aside for the sake of convenience, or social and economic benefits?

I intend to prove that the characters in P & P show that through a better understanding of human weaknesses and strengths one can comfortably attain happiness and through consideration and respect, to the happiness/freedom of the others one achieves respect and love of the society which though cannot make living comfortable but it definitely makes *life* comfortable. The female protagonists of Austen's novels seem to pave the way for modern women and can rightly be called forerunners of female freedom in male dominated world. Her concerns about ethical issues that result in serious conflicts help people see things in a tolerant and independent manner. My admiration for the restraint and balance in the novel is born out of the allowance for human frivolities. The author accepts people with their weaknesses as opposed to changing them the way they *should* be. The protagonists in P & P summon freedom of thought. They learn that by allowing people to choose what they think is best for them may

bring them contentment, and that harboring of individual ideas may help humans to live the life of their choice.

Elizabeth, who believes in personal freedom of thought and choice, does not tolerate recklessness and impropriety. Sometime, however, I am led to see a reflection of the author in her though work of art does not need an author's personal views for clarification or understanding. *P & P* has been made into a movie several times, which points to appeal and charm it continues to have for directors and producers and, more importantly, the audience. I for one do not believe in labeling a work of art; doing that somehow physically and figuratively confines that work. For example, classifying *P & P* into one or another category of being “a satire”; “a comedy”; or “an allegory” limits the scope of the novel. I would rather read it as a novel which has a remarkable appeal due to the whole, not just due to one part of it. It is capable of being all mentioned above, and much more. If Harding considers *P & P* and other of Austen's novels as the work of a moralist and humourist, Trilling finds it idealistic while Mooneyham and Devlin trace an educationist who intends to create female awareness. All these critics are justified in their own evaluations as they study her from these points of views and present their arguments accordingly.

I see other issues besides the ones profusely discussed; the more a great work is explored the more possibilities one finds in it. In addition to money, class, irony, marriage, morality and dissatisfaction with the world in *P & P*, Austen seems to be conscious of other pressing problems of society. Chapter I, “The Drama of Ethics,” of my research thesis deals with the moral muddle in which the characters find themselves as they fail to realize their errors and hence either ignore them or repeat them. This state of unconsciousness leads Lydia to elope shamelessly without any remorse. Her parents suffer and the future of her sisters is at stake; she is least concerned

because she is not conscious of the fatal implications that her action might lead to. Blinded by her desires to live life as she wants it, Lydia completely overlooks the pain and suffering she causes others in the pursuit of her happiness. Mr. Bennet feels penitent only because he had been earlier warned by Elizabeth but Mrs. Bennet keeps on blaming Wickham, the co-partner, in the act of elopement. In P & P the characters seem to be unaware of their moral confusion. Mrs. Bennet criticizes Mrs. Long to be a selfish woman who wants to marry her nieces to Mr. Bingley but in turn she nurtures the same desire. The lack of awareness regarding the true meaning of happiness leads Austen to expose the vanities of her character.

Chapter II, “Threadbare Morality and the New World,” focuses on the effects of change in the values and norms of the society which run counter to the traditional beliefs and opinions. I intend to prove that only those go through a process of self-realization who are ready to adjust with the changing times. Those who become aware of their failings also learn how to overcome them to achieve happiness and contentment. Darcy and Elizabeth change positively and manage to elevate socially, intellectually and morally. While characters like Wickham and Lydia remain the same and hence they live a discontented life. However the basic dynamics of morality remain the same, only the mechanics change for adjustment purpose.

The social issues of Austen’s times have been discussed in Chapter III, “The Unregulated Regulations of the Society,” to find out their relevance to ours; as her readers in the 21st century. I have discussed how social classifications of human beings lead to misunderstandings and complexities. It deprives them of real happiness because only through interaction one is able to solve the issues of life. Those who remain alienated lose their peace of mind and finally the society ignores them. Lady Catherine suffers in isolation, because she refuses to accept the social changes that are happening in P & P. This is the biggest blow that can strike human

beings because man is basically a social animal. A family is the basic unit of society; if it is founded on solid grounds of trust and understanding, it provides happiness and peace. Perhaps this is what is there between the Gardiners. Children of authoritative and estranged parents lead a miserable life because they do not learn to communicate with others. Mary Bennet fails to achieve self-awareness and hence remain an alien in the family while Anne de Bourgh suffers from lack of confidence. They do not trust others and remain emotionally isolated though socially acceptable.

Chapter IV, “Sexual Power Politics,” deals with the dynamics of relationship between men and women. In this chapter I explore what harms domestic felicity and how one can achieve the kind of happiness which makes a marriage successful. All power corrupts and if relationships are formed with an intention of achieving power over the other it results in domestic fights, and destroys the peace and harmony that a married couple look forward to having after marriage. The chapter also presents contrasting images of men and women and brings to the surface their hopes and fears. It deals with freedom of men and women on the basis of humanity irrespective of colour, caste, or creed with equal respect for each other.

My interest is not to see limitation or expansion of a particular meaning or an idea in P & P, my concern is to see the role of morality, society and traditional beliefs regarding male-female relationship and to explore the role of these institutions in the development of characters. I contend that Ms Austen’s heroines are conscious of class distinction or barriers and that they are too mature to consider it a hindrance in their pursuit of happiness. Elizabeth initially thinks that it will indeed be something “to be the mistress of Pemberley” (228). Later, when Darcy proposes to her, she realizes that she has been given a privilege. Like a self-conscious person, Elizabeth too likes to be duly respected as an individual first before she agrees to become

somebody's lifelong partner. Fanny in *Mansfield Park* and Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* do precisely the same. They are not the kind of shallow women whom wealth and status can impress. They want to be treated as equal partners; they want a relation which is based on mutual respect and equality.

In *P & P* grace and modesty are not merely virtues; they also empower women by inculcating in them a consciousness of their identity. The virtues that elevate women do the same for men too, and as a result a harmonious relationship is established. Finding herself in a period of transition from traditional beliefs and values to modern concepts of equal opportunity for all, Austen helps her characters learn to go through this transition with dignity and understanding so as to avoid social and psychological conflicts or lack of adjustment with others. The characters in *P & P* become conscious to the change around them and with sympathy and tolerance they learn to adjust their ideas to the changing trends. That is the lesson that we learn from Austen's work. Be it Eighteenth Century England or any other time and place, Austen's novels will not lose the appeal and charm that they have had for readers over the past two centuries. We, as human beings also suffer from deficient self-knowledge, experience absence of delicacy, and wryness and exhibit a certain amount of shallowness from time to time in our routine activities. Hence we are able to identify with the characters of her novels and share their troubles, hopes and fears and sympathize with them.

The dynamics of variable ethics among the members of the society reveal the inward struggle of the individuals for dominance over the others. This power-play extends throughout *P & P* in different forms. The conflict lies not only between values, ideals and beliefs, but between social classes, status and ranks. Even the individuals seem to fall victims to this clash. The moral stance of the characters, differ within the same social setup and hence throughout the

novel we trace different men and women looking for eligible life partners in the form of a political power-play.

Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship turns out to be based on a very different ideal. Both look for a union based on their own principles and values, hence their terms for a long term relationship turns out to be the most difficult one. While other characters look for superficial qualities/aspects in their spouses, i.e., beauty and wealth these two want to create a relationship based on the intellectual level of consciousness as their scale of perception is different from those of the others around them.

Both are aware of each other's weakness as well as strength and will only come to terms by learning to accept them. It is only when we consciously make an effort to understand the other that we are able to see our own weaknesses and this enables us to adjust our own views with the world around us. Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley helps her observe Darcy in the atmosphere where he was reared. He behaves with ease and dignity and there are no reservations in his behavior while he acts differently when he is at Netherfield, Longbourn and Meryton. He finds hard to adjust in that scenario because he does not belong to it and this fact is ignored by Elizabeth when she is evaluating his character. He belongs to a different world and in order to understand him she had to visit his world, hence her visit to Pemberley helps her revise her opinion.

Elizabeth's freedom of thought and speech are acceptable in her community but to the others, i.e., the Bingley sisters, Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh they are objects of censure for they belong to those set of people who believe in conventions. Even Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth's own mother fails to understand her independent spirit. The world does not understand Elizabeth so Elizabeth must try to understand the world or try to either ignore it or

make it understand her. She has to leave aside her prejudice in order to understand Darcy's pride and then judge his character.

Most of the males and females in the novel are blindly following the existing strict codes of conventions of their society and for them true happiness resides in worldly treasures and transient goods because living a superficial life they are not conscious of the bliss that one experiences due to self-satisfaction. That is why Mrs. Bennet fails to comprehend why Elizabeth refuses to marry Collins.

The characters in *P & P* live a routine conventional life so they do not come into clash with the others around them. Jane does not find anything amiss in the attitude of the Bingley sisters because she accepts them as they are, being socially superior to the Meryton community. But to Elizabeth they are snobbish and rude for they fail to mix with the others around them. They are conscious of their wealth and status and that is where they exist.²³ They dislike Elizabeth for they fear the strength of her personality while Elizabeth manages to "individuate" herself for she possesses the desire to be "actualized" (Jung 179). The aspects of Eighteenth century contemporary life reverberate in *P & P* in the form of total submission of most of the characters to the conventions of that time but what makes the novel interesting is Elizabeth's behavior that defies all prevailing norms. Mrs. Bennet is a restless woman who fails to grasp the reality of the world around her and because of her "weak understanding" she fails to develop a solid relationship with her husband. She lives in an atmosphere of superficial values with a single concern to get her daughters married. We see Elizabeth living a very different life though sharing the same house. She lives in a different state of existence where suffering is private and there is no rest till she comes to terms with herself. She manages to dissolve all her fears and doubts by going through the process of self-realization.

Austen does not seem to let her characters lose their natural freedom. If they are to live their lives in contentment they must make their own choices. In Rousseau's society inner happiness and satisfaction are mechanical rather than instinctive for they are based on a contract which is to be followed without any argument. On the other hand, in Austen's novels, "relationship is always a part of the wider story of a society that is constantly adapting in order to protect and promote its unity and well-being" (Giffin 149), which leads one to question, if, Ms Austen had any concept of an ideal society in her mind. She makes it clear in her novels that she is disappointed with her society. She seems to be dissatisfied with those who fail to see the truth as it is. Is she in favour of conservatives or moderns or whether she has a new society in mind? Or does she have some sort of a synthesis of the two in mind?

Ms Austen's characters, especially her heroines are strong, independent, and confident women who have the audacity to stand against the authority of the society and speak their true mind. Her "heroines realize that they are at the mercy of...malevolent human beings" (Barron, Nokes 30). For example, Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* gathers courage to state her decision in front of her dominating uncle, for not marrying Henry Crawford, even though her uncle is bent upon extracting her acquiescence. "I am so perfectly convinced that I could never make him happy, and that I should be miserable myself" (M P 328). Elizabeth is not "ready to yield or surrender anything to men" when it concerns her "honour" (Perkins 136, 37). Considering Austen's belief in the right one can never say anything with perfect authority though MacIntyre states that she "praises practical intelligence in an Aristotelian way and humility in a Christian way" (224) yet her treatment of the subject of "ordination" in *Mansfield Park* is very liberal and I think, not profoundly Christian, judging it according to the times in which she lived.

Ms Austen's attitude towards sin and punishment is very modern. She makes her characters learn through their suffering. They learn to correct their faults and this psychological treatment produce men and women who are more conscious of themselves, they go through an internal struggle and through the outer world they are able to see the inner world. For her preservation of chastity, modesty and general goodness are actions that bring harmony in the society. She avoids writing about prevalent social evils of her society such as rape, debaucheries, murders and the likes. To her they were causes of misery for these sins originated in the miserable situation of some characters.

Eliza, in *Sense and Sensibility*, we are indirectly told, loses her virginity; she is discussed in absentia and her predicament is related through Colonel Brandon. Austen avoids dwelling on it. Though such subjects were being discussed privately yet they were not overtly discussed because the boundaries of decorum had to be observed; these issues were among the social taboos. Even though Miss Fanny Burney and even Richardson avoid this subject directly, it is a predominant theme of their novels *Evelina* and *Pamela*.

It seems that Austen neither subscribes to any particular moral philosophy²⁴, nor advocates a particular moral code of an acceptable or even passable behaviour. Perhaps this is why her characters do not epitomize any ideal virtue or a more desirable behaviour of some sort. They are common people; as common as any that we find around us on a day to day basis. Their strengths and weaknesses are the strengths and weaknesses of all and sundry in a society irrespective of class, colour, or creed. If at all there is any "virtue" that Austen appreciates in her characters, it is the respect that one human has for another which revolves around equal and mutual respect for all. She disapproves of the shallow people who easily get impressed with appearance and material things. However, Austen never ridicules such characters; she accepts

them as part and parcel of society exactly the way she approves of strengths and weaknesses in an individual. From this point of view Austen is perhaps one of the earliest humanists who still commands respect and interest among readers of all ages and places.

Notes

¹ The phrase has been taken from Keats poem *Endymion*.

² All subsequent references to this novel *Pride and Prejudice* are indicated by the letters, P & P for the sake of brevity. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: David Campbell Ltd. 1991).

³ D. H. Lawrence while discussing Galsworthy ranks Austen too in the same list of writers whose characters are social and human and so easily recognizable. *The English Novel* essay *On John Galsworthy* Ed. Hazell. Stephan, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd.) 1978.

⁴ Letter to J. Edward Austen, then aged 18, December 16, 1816; *Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*, Collected and ed. by Chapman. R.W. (London: Oxford at the Clarondon Press 1932. Letter 134), Pp. 468-69.

⁵ Letter to Mr. James Stanier Clarke, domestic chaplain to the Prince of Wales, December 11, 1815; *Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*, Collected and ed. by Chapman. R. W. (London, 1932. Letter 120), p. 443.

⁶ “Miss Austen understood the smallness of life to perfection. She was a great artist, equal in her small sphere to Shakespeare.” Tennyson.
http://classiclitt.about.com/cs/profileswriters/p/aa_jausten.html

⁷ Miss Charlotte Bronte believes that Austen delineates “the surface of the lives of genteel English people” (7) , while Sir Walter Scott that she “confines herself chiefly to the middling classes of society”(2), Julia Kavanagh comments that “her material is slender”, and that “she could not speak the language of any strong feelings”(11). G. K. Chesterton complains of her “infinitely smaller field than any of her later rivals”(20), while Garrod points out that “her range never widens, her tone never deepens”(28). Yet all of them accept her greatness of art despite her limitations. There are those who disagree with these opinions. Macaulay considers her “nearest to Shakespeare”(6) in giving such a variety of characters to the English literature. *Critics on Jane Austen* edited by Judith O’Neill (London: George Allen and unwin Ltd. 1970). Modern critics view her work from other perspective and hence like Litz, we are convinced that earlier critics have confined her within certain boundaries while interpreting her work..

⁸ Charlotte Bronte. Letter to G. H. Lewes, January 12, 1848; *The Brontes: Their Friendships, Lives, and Correspondence*, eds. Wise. T .J. and Symington. J. A. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1980), Pp. 179-80.

⁹ The lines are taken from an extract by Richard Whately that appears in *Critics on Jane Austen* edited by Judith O’Neill, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970).

¹⁰ The first criticism appeared in an unsigned review of *Emma* in Quarterly Review, on Oct. 1815 but was issued in March 1816 Vol. xiv. The second quote is taken from *Journal of Walter Scott 1825-26* edited by J. G. Tait, *Edinburgh Journal* entry, March 14, 1826.

¹¹ Thomas Babington Maculay, *Diaries and letters of Madame D"Arblay"*, an unsigned article in *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. January 1843, Pp.561-62 (530-70) This extract appeared in. , *Critics on Jane Austen* ed. by O"Neil. Judith, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.), p. 6. Also see, Ifor Evans, *English Literature: Values and Traditions*, (London: C. Tinling and Co. Ltd.. 1962), p. 79.

¹² Quoted, in a book by Nicholas Marsh, *Jane Austen: The Novels* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) who refers the quotation to Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. 1979. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

¹³ Letter to Jane Austen's nephew, J. Edward Austen, then aged 18, December 16, 1816; *Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*, Collected and ed. by R. W. Chapman, (London, 1932). Letter 134, pp. 468-9.

¹⁴ *The Ethics of Jane Austen's Heroines* 123HelpMe.com. 31 Oct. 2007 <http://www.123HelpMe.com/view> Also see Morgan, Susan. *In the Meantime: Character and Perception in Jane Austen's Fiction.*: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

¹⁵ Seymour. Dom Nicholas *Jane Austen's Clergymen*. Address to Jane Austen Society AGM at Chawton House. – 17th July 1993 <http://www.starcourse.org/abbey/JACI.html> (The internet Public Library. Online Literary Criticism Collection 28.12.07).

¹⁶ Seymour (as above in 15).

¹⁷ They find deeper meanings and new perspectives in her work. Due to individuals like Kant and Rousseau a revolution occurred in the minds of the people through factual empiricism and the idea of the noble savage respectively. Furthermore the Romantic Movement promoted transcendental imaginative ideals and social libertine. The idea of finding God through inner excursions of imagination rather than outer excursions made divinity and divine knowledge a private experience. In this scenario people like Mr. Collins and Mary in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* have no influence on the lives of the masses; rather they serve to reveal a duality in the public and private life of the church functionaries. The herd was no more to be led by a shepherd for the idea of a leader and the led changed dynamically. Intellectuals wanted people to think independently irrespective of class, colour or creed. This newly emerging social and intellectual irregularity was becoming regularized.

¹⁸ Being a proponent of female subjectivity, some critics read Austen from Marxist point of view. Marilyn Butler believes that one reason for Austen's popularity in other societies too, is, because "All societies have their rites of passage such as puberty and parenthood; men the world over exchange young women for money or land or in pursuit of dynastic alliances. No wonder then that Jane Austen's novels, generally taken in the British Isles as the most parochial of great novels, have readers in Japan, India and Nigeria who can easily identify with their essential subject-matter"(ix). "*Introduction to Emma*," ed. Butler. Marilyn (London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd. 1991). Samuel Kliger appreciates Elizabeth's natural instinctive reactions, her benevolence and her originality (49), while Brower is impressed by Austen's "blend of ironic wit and drama (32)". *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice* A collection of critical essays edited by Rubinstein. E., (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.1969).

¹⁹ The criticism appears in an essay by Henry James *The Art of Fiction* (1908) Longman's Magazine, iv (Sep. 1884): reprinted in *Partial Portraits* (London. 1888) pp. 78-97.

²⁰ See R. W. Chapman, *Critics on Jane Austen* Ed. O'Neill. Judith (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1970), p. 26.

²¹ The quote is taken from an extract of Virginia Woolf, in *Critics on Jane Austen* ed. O'Neill. Judith (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 1970.

²² D.W. Harding, *Critics on Jane Austen*, ed. O'Neill. Judith (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1970), pp. 17-18.

²³ C. G. Jung believes that the "mechanism of convention keeps people unconscious, for in that state they can follow their accustomed tracks like blind brutes, without the need for conscious decision." Jung, C. J. *The Development of Personality*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1954) p.179

²⁴ There have been critics who found Aristotelian approach or Kantian ethics in her work, see Eva T. H. Brann. *Review: Aristotle from a Woman's Perspective The Review of Politics* > Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 1996), pp. 817-819 Stable URL: [http://links.jstor](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0034-Pamela M. Huby. Review: Aristotle's Social Science The Classical Review > New Ser., Vol. 41, No. 2 (1991), pp. 368-369 Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0009-Fredric Jameson. Morality versus Ethical Substance Social Text > No. 8 (Winter, 1983) Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0164-Jonathan Arac. Truth PMLA > Vol. 115, No. 5 (Oct. , 2000) Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0030-David Gallop. Jane Austen and Aristotelian Ethic – Philosophy muse.jhu.edu/journals/philosophy_and_literature/v023/23.1gallop.html Stephen L. Darwall <i>Virtue</i> 2002books.google.com/books isbn =06312311 45 Chris Jones <i>Jane Austen and the Public Sphere</i> Literature Compass, Volume 3, Issue 3, Page 429-443, May 2006 Giffin. Michael, <i>Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England</i> The Heythrop Journal, Volume 46, Issue 4, Page 525-613, Oct 2005, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2265.2005.00272. Donna Heiland. <i>Gothic and the Generation of Ideas</i> Literature Compass, Volume 4, Issue I , Page 48-65, Jan. 2007, doi: 10. 1111/j.1741-4113. 2006.00414. Gilman. Eric, <i>Objectivity in Conduct</i> Philosophy > Vol. 29, No.111, (Oct., 1954) pp. 308-320 Stable URL: Vol. II, No. 2 (April 1981), pp. 27-34 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/>.

Chapter One

The Drama of Ethics

I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can (Austen 53).

Jane Austen holds a sympathetic view of the moral condition and ethics of her society that was going through a change.¹ Rousseau and the Nineteenth Century Romantic Movement changed the old social order and the aged concepts about human relations. Austen is conscious of the changes occurring in her society and is sensitive to the shortcomings and strengths of her society. She raises questions about moral issues in her works which the intellectuals of her era and those who came later interpret from their particular perspectives. She involves her readers in the moral concerns and dilemmas facing her characters.

That, however, does not mean she preaches through her characters or work. She successfully and sufficiently distances herself from her characters allowing them to make their choices of right or wrong. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth finds fault in Darcy's behavior without realizing that she herself makes a number of mistakes. She never checks her sisters though she is conscious of their lack of decorum. It is only Darcy's harsh comments that make her see the faults in her family's behavior, and she learns through him.

The characters in *Pride and Prejudice*¹ as well as in all her other novels learn from their own mistakes. This is why her novels are called dramatic novels.² Austen's comments; direct or ironic, help the reader know her characters more intimately and that is why the reader is able to partake in their experiences and their problems. This makes her world, which apparently is limited, complex and multi-dimensional. Furthermore, what makes her novels unique is the subtle sense of humor she successfully maintains through the novels as she observes the idiosyncrasies of the characters of her novels. The characters themselves remain oblivious to the ridiculousness of their beliefs and we see that Mrs. Bennet does not even consider the possibility of her daughters falling short to the expectations of the Netherfield Park residents. She considers Mr. Bingley her rightful property (1). However Austen hardly passes judgment on any one of these persons no matter how absurd or preposterous their behavior is. This quality lends the characters not only an air of complexity, but they are also true to themselves and life. They expose their ethics through their actions and dealings with the others around them.

Austen's own views on ethics; as we observe through her characters and her personal letters written to her family members and friends seem to hold an affinity with the works of earlier philosophers like Aristotle; explored and theorized by later philosophers too. Gallop believes that personal growth of Austen's characters leads towards self-realization and that her characters are "sharply individuated portraits with astounding dramatic realism."³ Though she rarely comments on her characters and situations in which they find themselves, her tone is

¹ All subsequent references to the novel will henceforth be referred to as P & P and the references to the text from the novel will be incorporated in the text by only mentioning the page number. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: David Campbell Ltd. 1991)

always humorous and her attitude humanistic. She may not agree with the actions of her characters and at times humorously points out their vanities yet she is never harsh on them.

Some contend that her world is limited; others, however, opine that Austen deals with the limited view of life that people have. Even if we tend to pay attention to these views, we are led to wonder how a writer with limitations suddenly rejects all the restrictions applied to her art and expands her characters. She portrays them in such a way, that even the most rigid of her critics, Garrod, agrees that her minor characters are the “best characters” and that he “feels happy” with Elizabeth (37). When it comes to delineation of characters “she presents the people, and they reveal themselves”⁴, and that where “exactness of detail” is concerned, she is “remarkable”.⁵

To say that her novels deal superficially with the ethics⁶ of her society is again debatable for she writes as an integral part of the society in which she lived. She lived among the people, experiencing their hopes and fears and was fully aware of the superficiality of their moral condition. Without openly sermonizing, she manages to teach her characters, lessons of virtue and vice through their own actions. Her approval of a character’s actions and behavior is perceptibly visible in her sympathetic treatment of that character. This is truer in the case of what I would call substantial characters i.e. the protagonists like Elizabeth and Darcy who make mistakes but are able to realize their own errors after going through the process of self-analysis; for example, Darcy’s “I am sorry” (185) and Elizabeth’s “Till this moment I never knew myself”(196).

Austen’s characters are neither sinners nor saints; they are humans whom we see around us even today. We are all subject to err as well as subject to goodness. Had this not been the case, the world would have been either a paradise or a hell. We suffer as much at our loss as we

rejoice at our gains. We are not only inventing destructive weapons but helping humanity through friendly inventions to promote the living standards.

The mediocrity prevalent in the world of *P & P* blinds Darcy and Elizabeth to the depth and subtlety of each other; for each the other is one of the many who is fishing a spouse. Miss Bingley's designs are quite apparent though Darcy never encourages her and Mrs. Bennet is shamelessly vocal about her schemes. Like most of us, Austen's characters know themselves little. They suffer from lack of self-knowledge—something that they acquire through their own experiences as they go through the rigmarole of life.⁷

Austen's characters seem to be confused in their actions and dealings which reflect the poverty of their ethics. They are dissatisfied with the norms of their society and yet hesitate to rebel for they know that they will suffer social excommunication. Charlotte Lucas marries Collins though she is well acquainted with his weaknesses because he is the only eligible bachelor who proposes to her. A refusal would mean “dying an old maid” (117). Women like her are scared of this treatment and hence they try to mould themselves to the popular conventions so as to be a part of it. As a result they either surrender or comply.

Her characters reveal themselves through their actions and dialogues and the reader finds them in a deep moral muddle. The irony of human beings is that they cannot afford to live outside their social existence, for then, they will be socially exiled which is the bitterest of penalty imaginable and they fear to be declared social outcasts. That is why they endeavor to tolerate the others with whom they disagree. Darcy and Elizabeth who are conscious of the frailties of those around them do not argue with them. They have some reservations about the prevailing ethics, yet they manage to live comfortably in their relevant social set ups. Even the

immoral characters in *P & P* are drawn with a lot of sympathy for they are human beings with human failings and weaknesses.

Some of her characters are extremely vulnerable to the “evil” designs of others, like Wickham in *P & P*. Few, like Elizabeth and Darcy in the same novel reveal a silent disapproval of the established norms of their society but they are not articulate. The popular notions of social values prevalent in the world of *P & P* are the causes of misunderstandings between Darcy and Elizabeth. People are generally obsessed with the idea of marriage and regard the superficial qualities with serious concern. Money, class and status are the talk of the town. It seems that if there are no bachelors in Hertfordshire except the affluent ones who newly enter the community. We do hear about Charlotte Lucas’s brothers but they seem to have no other existence; we only hear that they were relieved to hear that Charlotte will not die an old maid. Perhaps they do not fit the criteria of “eligibility”.

Interestingly, the reader senses Darcy’s attraction for Elizabeth. His eyes follow her and she keeps noticing his interest in her “What does Mr. Darcy mean listening to my conversation with Colonel Foster?” and, not understanding his intention she declares “if I do not begin by being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him” (20).

Darcy and Elizabeth are at war with each other; without realizing the cause of a strain between them. The rift widens with the passage of time due to misunderstandings. Darcy is not ready to give up because of his pride and Elizabeth because of the prejudice against the lot which Darcy represents. Darcy believes that “To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either” (46) while Elizabeth believes in authentic and equal relationship between the persuader and the persuaded.⁸ They fail to understand each other. She becomes the representative of the changing times when women were becoming conscious of their own

identity, while Darcy has to learn that social understanding depends on compromise among the individuals of society.⁹

Some of the young characters in *P & P* are people of substance, who are ready to free themselves from the unethical notions of morality and happiness, inculcated by their society. Elizabeth and Darcy as well as Bingley and Jane are such couples who prefer peace of mind to forced relationships based on compromises. Mr. Darcy's fear of pretentious women makes him ignore Elizabeth at first, as she sits among her pretentious neighbours and vulgar mother. Darcy with the preconceived notions of the shallowness of this society marginalizes the whole assembly. As such her beauty does not attract him.

When Elizabeth enters Netherfield Park to enquire after her sick sister, she comes on foot. The three miles walk has made her dress dirty and hair disheveled, but she is not conscious of it as she appears before the immaculately dressed company of the Bingley sisters. This fascinates Darcy; it is the first time he has seen her true 'self'. It is there that he observes her as an individual with an active mind and strong morals. She is not daunted by his wealth or charms and her disregard to her physical appearance is a novel experience to him. Her intelligence, playfulness and goodness of heart impress him when she says, "I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can" (53).¹⁰

The characters in *P & P* are on the road to the discovery of self. They are to explore their inner world to truly understand the outer world. The journey is painstaking. It is a blissful moment that triggers a movement of self-realization. It comes to Darcy in the form of a desire to marry Elizabeth. Darcy tries to fight back this impulse because marriage with Elizabeth means that he has to act against his "will", "reason" and "character" (180). He does not at first bear the

suffering that he goes through; he tries harder and fights it back. He begins by finding faults in her person then in her family and finally in her connections. But overcome by the strength of the overwhelming force he has to admit “In vain have I struggled. It will not do.” (178). Elizabeth’s love educates him to look beyond his self. The social construction of class distinction is very strongly inculcated in him and that makes him disdainful toward the “inferiority” of her “connections” (182).

The leading characters in *P & P* possess good manners and grace. They, however, lack awareness of their shortcomings; like Mrs. Bennett, most of them believe in what they see. The Meryton assembly considers Mr. Darcy “proud” because he would not talk to them intimately. While he, on the other hand thinks that there is “little beauty and no fashion” (14) and hence he does not feel the smallest interest in them. Darcy as well as Elizabeth has to go through an education of becoming conscious of their environment and their own inability to understand their own weaknesses. Till they do this they will not understand the others. They need to learn how to free themselves of the wrong prevailing notions of their society.

Elizabeth and Darcy, in *P & P*, unconsciously struggle to secure a relationship based on understanding rather than forced relationships based on compromises. Though Bingley and Jane also share compatibility of dispositions yet it is Jane’s beauty which attracts Bingley first and later it leads to a realization of her amiability. Yet, his desire is not strong enough to counter Darcy’s opposition and easily led by Darcy’s opinion he behaves like a compliant buyer who depends on the approval of others in case of a purchase. He leaves her without any explanation or consideration.

Darcy though shown in the beginning as a snob and rude man, flowers into a man of substance with the passage of time. Mooneyham believes that “the central conflict in each novel

is between the hero and heroine; their moral, intellectual and linguistic opposition defines the progress of education and growth” (ix), and through education, their conflicts and their problems are resolved.

Darcy is made to analyze himself. What he lacks is a lively temper and a broader view of life. He is made to appreciate the beauty and strength of love. As an only son he has gone through hard times caring for his younger sister and being disappointed in Wickham; whom his father loved and had made provisions in his will; but regardless of all affections his attempt to tarnish the Darcy family reputation makes Darcy a cynic. His meeting and appreciation of Elizabeth begins his education in ethics from a humanitarian point of view. He has been taught strict discipline, good manners as appreciated by the elite, and the morals of the aristocracy. It is afterwards that he realizes the difference between those ideals that he was taught to uphold and those that are the true virtue ethics.¹¹

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 principals but left to follow them in pride and conceit. ...I was spoiled 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, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to *wish* at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own (349).

He is glad that the education which love gives him makes him a better human being for he has been able to gain what Aristotle calls “self-control”¹² that exhibits a person’s moral virtues; he justly gives all the credit to Elizabeth. “You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You shewed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased” (349). Though these lines offer an insight to many views and ideas as well as

philosophical beliefs, probably upheld and promoted by Jane Austen through her other novels, but at the moment their moral implications are considered. Miss Austen does not seem to blame a character who has a faulty upbringing for she seem to believe that till we know the difference between good and bad, fit or unfit, proper or improper, right or wrong etc. we cannot be held responsible and hence punished for the results of our actions. This goes very near to what Hazlitt says in his essay on Jeremy Bentham. “In ascertaining the rules of moral conduct, we must have regard not merely to the nature of the object, but to the capacity of the agent, and to his fitness for apprehending or attaining it” (7).

Darcy’s acknowledgement of his lack is his gain. The moment he realizes why he falls below Elizabeth’s idea of a “gentleman” as she retorts after the proposal, he starts analyzing his behaviour. He finds out that what he publicly practices is against that which he privately believes. He may disregard Elizabeth as not “handsome enough to tempt [him]” (9), yet in the very next meeting he suffers from the same infliction that he had earlier inflicted on her. When next time he sets his eyes upon her he feels a “very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow” (24).

Darcy is unaware of the change that makes his thoughts divert to a different direction. When Miss Bingley sneers at him with the talk of a particular future “joy”, he at once replies, “That is exactly the question which I expected you to ask. A lady’s imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment. I knew you would be wishing me joy” (24).

We soon realize that he acts exactly the way he disapproves of. First he is made to suffer and feel the pain that he causes Elizabeth; hurting her pride, and when he goes through the same pain of being refused; this time by Elizabeth, his own pride is hurt and he starts considering

Elizabeth in a very different light. She has been the other side of his own self, jolting him to realize the so far ignored realities of life. In the second instance he snubs Miss Bingley by pretending to be an intellectual super being. We observe him soon doing exactly that which he disdains, calling it a typical female weakness, and we see that from admiration he himself jumps to love and the next time that he meets Elizabeth, after leaving Hertfordshire, at Rosings, he proposes to her. The reader observes the process of his enlightenment with great delight as he begins coming to terms with his outer and inner 'self'. This discovery is achieved not without suffering for he is miserable and has to struggle against his own persona of an accomplished, rich aristocrat who is a social icon of all that is 'proper', before succumbing. He has fallen desperately in love with Elizabeth, and when the realization dawns upon him, he is a changed person. Instead of condemning Lydia's behaviour he could see the vulnerability of her situation for he has humanized. His own sister has been near to elopement had it not been his chance visit to her. He is able to sympathize with the grief of the family though he insists that his interference and help in the matter is all because he wanted to save Elizabeth's happiness.

Moving in a circle where Mr. Darcy had no emotional contact with those who were inferior in social status, he fails to understand that every class has its own set of values and ethics. Darcy, can be defended by considering his situation in life, the way he was brought up. Himself well behaved he could not tolerate the vulgarity apparent in the behaviour of the Bennet family. His public ethics have been well taught and well learnt. But he is yet to learn about the intricacies of human frivolities and odd reactions, according to changing circumstances, so as to give them concessions.

He had been disappointed in Wickham and that has made him regard the Hertfordshire community with disdain, who praised him exceedingly not for his status but his wealth till they

saw him look proud. Mary Lascelles objects to calling Darcy proud by referring to his letter of explanation to Elizabeth. She believes that if was a “proud and reserved man” he would not have volunteered to let his sister’s weakness made public (162). To this accusation, Wiesenfarth states that it was an inconsistency of behaviour which can be traced “in eighteenth-century conduct books that sees such inconsistency as natural” (60). I believe that Darcy is desperately in love with Elizabeth and the power of love not only transforms his attitude towards other people but enables him to trust someone for the first time. He does not beg her attention, but “without...humbling” himself he “demand[s]” her “attention”, and “feelings” (185). He wants to secure Elizabeth’s good opinion without losing his grace.

Elizabeth and Darcy reveal yet another confusion of ethical views. Both hold loyalties to their respective classes and yet they find each other attractive. Elizabeth is not fully conscious of the bond that existed between the two, which would not rest both in peace until they are united. Darcy is the first one who becomes conscious of it but he has to fight hard against his ethical values that consider the Bennet family not worth forming a relationship. Elizabeth is the first to talk about it without realizing the full impact of her own speech.

I have always seen a great similarity in the turn of our minds. We are each of an unsocial disposition, unwilling to speak, unless we expect to say something that will amaze the whole room (86).

In a way, here Elizabeth unconsciously acknowledges her own weakness namely her own pride in her ‘self’. Whenever we see her arguing with someone, she gives the impression of being too confident in her judgment. Many a time she is told by the others to reconsider her views but we find her stubborn, for Miss Bingley did try to warn her of Wickham but she disregards her advice with contempt. Perhaps it is because her father encouraged her in believing to be of a better understanding than the rest of his children, and, hence tried to make

her an accomplice in his satires aimed at his wife, which she never seems to enjoy. Elizabeth, perhaps, comes up to her own description of herself when she compares herself with Mr. Darcy that they both want to say something to “amaze” others but it is Mr. Darcy’s “silent indignation”(22), which speaks loud enough to tell people about his dislikes. Both stay in a state of doubt for both are unwilling to consider the morals of the other sympathetically. Even the proposal of Mr. Darcy is according to Elizabeth “against your will, against your reason, and even against your character” (180). The difference against their beliefs had to be resolved before they are to consider each other with due respect. When Elizabeth tries to understand Mr. Darcy, she is able to understand herself, as Hegel points out, that it is the knowledge of the other that makes us realize our own existence.¹³

She becomes conscious of his attention when she visited Netherfield Park to nurse her sick sister, and notes

how frequently Mr. Darcy’s eyes were fixed on her. She hardly suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man; and yet that he should look at her because he disliked her, was still more strange (47).

From then afterwards the reader notices her thinking of him though she is not conscious. It is Mr. Darcy, who is also in a state of doubt, and trying to ward off any impending danger of a serious involvement “He really believes that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger” (48). The state of doubt exists because both consider their own moral judgments as “proper”. Conscious of his own social status he dare not reveal his feelings for fear of being ridiculed. Miss Bingley’s constant references to this, ironically serve only to make him rethink over what was really “proper”. He had earlier declared that “it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often exposes a strong understanding to ridicule” (53), revealing how much he cares about the opinions of others. Unconsciously he has so far existed

for the others which make him act in a way that suits his social existence; a landlord and a master.

Darcy is conscious of the reaction of the society to such a match, but he has to learn to reconsider “weaknesses”, “understanding” and “ridicule”. His concept of weakness is not only financial but also strict moral codes of his time. He has to learn from Elizabeth that “Implacable resentment is a shade in a character” (54). Carson believes that sensibility and rationality are finally united in form of Eliz-Darcy relationship. (24)¹⁴ While those who lack this virtue live a very superficial existence.

Mrs. Bennet is one such character who lives a very unconscious shallow life. She is the denizen of a society which gives more importance to talking about goodness rather than doing it. Attending the church on Sunday is more an opportunity to socialize rather than understand the spirit of the congregation. She waits for the assembly on Sunday Church to get introduced to Mr. Bingley who could perhaps be a potential husband of one of her daughters. The idea behind attending the church and the service there, is a little too subtle and complicated for her “mean understanding” (3). In a way her imbecility is a blessing in disguise for her; she is safe from the complex problem that life brings with it. Her petty lamentations on Lydia’s elopement are more due to material loss, and not due to the daughter’s act bringing a bad name to the family. This is why she rejoices with “spirits oppressively high” when she learns that Wickham agrees to marry Lydia. “No sentiment of shame gave a damp to her triumph” (291); she is happy that one of the daughters has found a husband no matter what. We sympathize with her for her lack of proper guidance and knowledge of the upper middle class propriety and decorum; she belongs to a family of traders, not the gentility. However, she wants to marry her daughters up.

It appears that Elizabeth is her least favourite daughter not because she loves her less but because she complicates things for her which she does not understand. Elizabeth wants a partner with whom she has mental affinity; her mother only wants a man for her. She is especially upset with her when she turns down Mr. Collins' proposal. Mrs. Bennett believes that Collins is an eligible bachelor. She fails to see in him what Elizabeth sees. Collins is not an intellectual match for Elizabeth. Similarly, Mrs. Bennett does not understand why her daughter, Elizabeth, takes interest in Mr. Darcy. For her Collins and Darcy are like; for her daughter they are poles apart. She does not like it when she learns that Darcy considers Elizabeth "tolerable" but forgets about her dislike for him after he proposes Elizabeth.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are two opposite poles intellectually, yet they manage to survive their matrimony. Mr. Bennet is witty and reserved, and most of the times his wit is directed against his wife. The latter is perhaps the result of his adherence to the mores of the society which has made his life miserable. However, the stigma associated with undoing a marriage debilitates him from breaking it. He chooses to suffer for the choice he made in marrying Mrs. Bennet for her looks. Living with her reveals that the "youth and beauty" which "captivated" (222) him do not have much of wits to make her passable; the "conjugal felicity" and the "domestic comfort" (222) he expected from marrying her remained only a dream. There is hardly any mental and intellectual affinity or compatibility between the two. No wonder Mrs. Bennet neither understands nor enjoys her husband's wit. She keeps herself busy through gossip about local activities. Both endure each other by ignoring the other and succeed in avoiding conflict. We sympathize with Mr. Bennet because he is sharp, intelligent and witty; his wife lacks all these qualities.

Characters, like Mr. Bennet, are helpless, for they find it hard to deal with the problems around them. Being the father of four daughters and a crude wife he finds himself in an abyss from where there is no escape. Failing to confront the challenges of the new social values, he becomes a recluse in his study so as to avoid the stupid ramblings of his bourgeois wife while Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, left unchecked increases her deficiency of good manners and folly.¹⁵ She disregards social decorum in her so-called freedom and lives only “to get her daughters married” (3).

Mr. Bennet’s moral standards are not strong enough to counter or even check her weaknesses. It seems that the parent’s views have influenced their children too. We see their children confused and indecisive in their attitudes and choices. The Bertram family too, in *Mansfield Park*, reveals this laxity in their behaviour. Here we see that true Christian morality becomes mere words that carry no meanings. The common men and women still attended Sunday churches regularly, and though they appear to listen attentively; they were unable to understand what is required of them.¹⁶

Mr. Bennet in the end realizes his indifference towards the education of his younger daughters and finally his wrath falls on Catherine,

I have at last learnt to be cautious, and you will feel the effects of it. No officer is ever to enter my house again, nor even to pass through the village. Balls will be absolutely prohibited, unless you stand up with one of your sisters. And you are never to stir out of doors, till you can prove, that you have spent ten minutes of every day in a rational manner (281).

Yet we do not see him discussing what he means by “rational manner”, that he expects of her. He still goes back to his library, for a drastic change is unnatural and nature cannot be completely changed. He is intelligent enough to appreciate morality and virtue where they exist and hence Elizabeth is his favourite. Furthermore, when Darcy comes to ask him for Elizabeth’s

hand he assents without confirming it with Elizabeth first, for it is later that he calls her to inform what Mr. Darcy had said. He explains to her that he agreed with him because “He is the kind of man, to whom I should never dare refuse anything, which he condescended to ask” (356). Mr. Bennet is conscious that matrimonial felicity cannot exist without mutual love and respect for one’s life partner, and that his daughter was the sort of person who would not be happy without it. He wants Elizabeth to think twice rather than himself telling Mr. Darcy that he will give his consent later.

In contrast to Darcy and Elizabeth, characters like Lydia live in a world of unconscious realities. Her quandary is that she is born in a family where one parent has alienated himself from the family and the other is busy finding eligible husbands for two grownup daughters. She pities her sisters as the task of her mother gets tougher. She is a child who wants to play and have fun, a happy-go-lucky person, but does not know how to do it properly. She is left unguided and pampered by a mother with “mean understanding” (3) she thinks that parties and balls are the only source of enjoyment. She is confused, for she needs proper guidance, which Mr. Delvin considers as lack of “true education” (99).¹⁷

The two sisters, Lydia and Kitty, are wild and irrational. They do not have any regard for morality or virtue. They love to have fun and flirt with all the young men who pay them a little attention. They are “silly and ignorant” (3), and are the epitome of their mother’s attitude towards life, especially when it comes to finding an eligible bachelor. This, however, does not mean that Mrs. Bennet is entirely responsible for the way their last three daughters behave. She is a “woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper” but she also has five unmarried daughters. Her sole concern of life is “to get [them] married” (3). She has been raised with this notion of life and she has not shed that belief at all. This is why she is the typical

product of her age.¹⁸ She wants her daughters to relive the life she has had. She manages to find herself a good man who provides her with economic security, and that is precisely what she believes a married life is all about. She does not have the capacity to see beyond the physical and hence she fails to realize that a successful marriage is a union of two and true minds.

Lydia is the youngest of the Bennet family. The parents hoped her to be a boy so as to save their entailed estate. She is reared with more indulgence than care by the mother: the father, on the other hand, does not try to improve her manners and morals though he finds many faults in her behaviour. Perhaps that is why she lacks a sense of propriety and behaves foolishly, due to which her family suffers.

Lydia's fault lies with her overindulgent mother and a father who took no interest in the education of his children. Ironically, her elopement brings a positive change in her father who realizes his part in the crime. It also serves to remove misunderstanding between Darcy and Elizabeth. Though Wickham and Lydia live a wild and loveless life, those who unite because of this tragedy develop a well-contented and prosperous marital relationship. Elizabeth tries hard to warn her father from sending Lydia unattended to Brighton for she fears that Lydia might expose "herself in some public place or other" because of her "wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character"(217). Mr. Bennet selfishly states the reason why he had permitted Lydia to go.

We shall have no peace at Longbourn if Lydia does not go to Brighton. Let her go, then. Colonel Forster is a sensible man, and will keep her out of any real mischief; and she is luckily too poor to be an object of prey to anybody. At Brighton she will be of less importance even as a common flirt than she has been here. The officers will find women better worth their notice. Let us hope, therefore, that her being there may teach her her own insignificance. At any rate, she cannot grow many degrees worse, without authorizing us to lock her up for the rest of her life (218).

The above quoted lines reveal the indolence and carelessness of Mr. Bennet towards his duties. He would rather Colonel Forster take care of his daughter than he himself even try to make her realize the impropriety her behaviour. Assigning his duty to the others, he dare not blame the others for the tragedy that results because he is not ready to shoulder his responsibility. He knows that Lydia is foolish, young and a “common flirt” (218), yet he allows her for the sake of his own peace of mind. Perhaps he is one of those modern emerging parents who believe in learning through trial and error.

Elizabeth leaves her father feeling sorry and disappointed. She does not persist because it was not in her [Elizabeth’s] nature, however, to increase her vexations by dwelling on them. She was confident of having performed her duty, and to fret over unavoidable evils, or augment them by anxiety, was no part of her disposition (218-19).

Throughout the novel we see Lydia craving for attention; she goes to any extreme to get it; hence the regular visits to her aunt at Meryton and the officers who pay her compliments. Too young to understand the complexities and hypocrisies of her society and the need for decorum, she fails to acquire the graces of her elder sisters and is spoiled by the “mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence” (261). She is very energetic and lively. At the age of fifteen she is already “out” and thus exposed to the society. Even Elizabeth fails to realize that it should not have been so; rather she defends her when Lady Catherine, a shrewd woman, objects to the liberty granted to her

Perhaps she is full young to be much in company. But really ma’am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters; that they should not have their share of society and amusement, because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early. The last born has as good a right to the pleasures of youth as the first. –And to be kept back on such a motive! – I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection or delicacy of mind (157).

Coming from Elizabeth, these comments reveal that Mrs. Bennet is not the only one who disregards Lydia's decent upbringing but that the general environment is in favour of fun and enjoyment. Elizabeth, whom Cohen considers "the moral center of her family",¹⁹ learns that she was wrong in defending Lydia after being tempered by Darcy's letter. She is afraid for Lydia who is "Vain, ignorant, idle and absolutely uncontrollable" (218). Elizabeth learns about the villainy of Wickham and Darcy's intervention to save his sister and the family from embarrassment, she articulates her fears for the first time when Lydia insists on visiting Brighton without properly chaperoned. A distorted form of "pleasure principle"²⁰ based on selfish interests, seems to prevail among some and hence sobriety and propriety have to struggle hard to be inculcated among the youth.

In those days it was not improper for young girls to visit friends but close intimacy was first consideration of parents who were interested in the welfare of their children, for, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* also goes on a trip to Bath with Mr. and Mrs. Allens, and they were close decent friends of the Morlands. That is why Elizabeth's reaction surprises the reader, who expects her to redress the wrongs of her family, because she knows them. The writer I think deliberately inserted the paragraph to make her human, for to err is human. Elizabeth warns her father and "having performed her duty" she would not "fret over unavoidable evil" for "anxiety" was not a part of her "disposition". This brings us to consider how much to blame Elizabeth, for Lydia's mistake. Was she not strong enough to prolong her argument till her father realizes the future implications that she dreaded, namely "the unavoidable evils"? As an elder sister, she has some duty towards her younger sisters yet she does not check them at all for their frequent visits to Meryton and their vulgar behaviour in the public. Perhaps it is so, because the environment of the locality was generally, a disregard for strict check.

Elizabeth could see through the weaknesses of her family and “blushed and blushed” (95) when Mrs. Bennet spoke about Jane’s prospect of marrying Mr. Bingley; though not a word has been said on the topic by Bingley. Mr. Darcy hears all this, as well as the uncivil remarks about him, yet Elizabeth does not intervene. She neither complains nor reproach her mother. Later, when Mary keeps on singing shamelessly at a party, all Elizabeth could feel is “mortification” accompanied by “painful sensations” (95). All she does is look at her father; pleading him silently to stop Mary from making a fool of herself. At Longbourn, there is no talk of impropriety of behaviour and avoidance of unnecessary exhibition of private thoughts. All the “shame and vexation” (235) is forgotten soon.

The only rational or decent conversation on proper behaviour and good breeding that we hear once is between Elizabeth and Jane, and even that, in private, so the younger girls never learn decorum of actions or conversation.²¹ The moral promotion of some of Miss Austen’s characters, nevertheless, occurs as the novel progresses.²²

In *P & P*, we see desperate young men and women, and parents with unmarried children leaving “propriety” and “decorum” aside and letting their wards roam unchecked in their desperate efforts to secure wealthy life partners.²³ Marriage in a well off family is the highest achievement of life and an “eligible match” is a prominent feather in the hat, as well as assurance of a comfortable life, hence Mrs. Bennet’s obsession of finding “eligible” husbands for her daughters. Money and material gains are more important than the matters that bring peace to hearts and minds and we see that females are led to marry “solely from the pure and disinterested desire of an establishment” (116). To remain unmarried is the biggest blow a woman could suffer and it is like being excommunicated from humanity; a humiliation that terrifies ladies and

their families of the threat of “dying an old maid” (117). Leaving aside all decency, integrity and decorum they stoop to anything to avoid this chastisement of society.

Confusion and panic grows in them and even a girl of seventeen like Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*, the Steele sisters in *Sense and Sensibility* etc. become pitiable figures. These characters become epitome of the problem their class faces in Austen’s world. They resort to secret schemes, lies and even elopement: a social blow to the integrity of an honourable family. In this effort they pay no heed to dignity, grace and a substantial character. They lose their identity, obsessed by the fear of being left alone, penniless. This makes them get involved in mean and immoral activities and they resort to petty “schemes”.

The lust for wealth infects men too, and characters like Wickham in P & P, Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* and Admiral Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* behave irrationally and ignore all moral codes in pursuit of money. Dowry is a big attraction for such greedy men or even so called “eligible” young men who are obsessed with the idea of increasing their wealth. Miss Austen observes all this, deplores it and states through Darcy, though he talks about women, can as well be applied to men,

Undoubtedly...there is meanness in *all* the arts which ladies sometimes employ for captivation. Whatever bears affinity to cunningness is despicable (36).

Hence the marriage of Mr. Hurst and Louisa is more a “social contract,” as Nancy Armstrong calls it; it is made to comply with the existing social requirements, rather than based on a desire for sincere companionship.²⁴ He is an “indolent man, who lived only to eat, drink, and play cards” (31) and seems to prefer staying with his in-laws rather than at his own house. There is hardly any conversation between the husband and wife throughout the novel which

exposes the sort of dull relationship they have. The indifferent attitude of the couple makes the reader doubt if it is even a social contract or more cruelly an economic one.

Mr. Collins' marriage with Charlotte Lucas shows that human emotions are sacrificed for outward comforts, and this creates a feeling of dissatisfaction. This social compromise becomes a serious problem, because truth has to be hidden deep inside while she pretends to be happy: she has deliberately bargained real happiness for petty gains. Charlotte appears cheerful in her husband's company but Elizabeth's watchful eyes detect "a faint blush" when Mr. Collins does not act with decorum. "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten" (149).

Both marriages are consciously made conforming to the social requirements, yet there is huge vacuum in the form of love and understanding. They live in their own socially defined boxes, a solitary life, where there is no conflict and nothing intelligent to talk about. On the other hand, for Elizabeth, respect and love are of supreme importance, and she thinks that without inner satisfaction no relationship is healthy. She makes very clear when she refuses the proposal of Mr. Collins.²⁵

Of all the daughters, only Jane and Elizabeth show signs of the intellectual richness of Mr. Bennet; the younger three have taken after their mother. Mary, being the middle child, symbolically reflects her father's loss of interest and the mother's influence on her. The unstated conflict between her parents translates into her inclination towards a different mindset altogether. She considers herself too righteous and morally superior to take any interest in the shallow world around her. The lack of her father's influence in her upbringing prevents her from developing Jane and Elizabeth-like attitude towards life. She finds in the religious books she reads what her

parents fail to provide. This “environment” alienates her from the surroundings, and she grows into a cynic. She is dissatisfied with everybody and poses herself as an epitome of true “Christian ethics”²⁶ while in reality she is conceited and pompous. She reacts to Lydia’s elopement by saying that “Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we must draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable—that one false step involves her in endless ruin—that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful” (270). Her words do not carry any emotions nor do they reflect any real concern. .

Miss Austen does not portray her characters as an epitome of virtue and goodness. Elizabeth has her weaknesses too. Her natural wit and intelligence makes her the favourite with her father and he enjoys her company proudly stating that “Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters” (3). This buttresses her confidence.

This could have been the motive behind his interest in her education and an equal liking for Jane whose natural goodness he does appreciate. This makes him look rather selfish and indolent for he does not try to exert his influence towards the younger daughters who need more guidance. The encouragement that Elizabeth receives from her father makes her too sure of herself and she acquires the habit of expressing her opinions quite freely. This judgmental strain in her, at times, leads her to form wrong notions about the others and she fails to perceive their true characters. This leads her to make a mistake in evaluating Wickham’s true character and later it disappoints her to learn about his reality. This lapse in her character becomes her moral weakness. Beguiled by her own beliefs, she fails to understand Charlotte Lucas’ comment that “Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance” (19). Charlotte believes that it is better for both parties to ignore each other’s defects for otherwise they will never marry. For Elizabeth a clear conscience is of supreme importance and she firmly believes that without sincerity and

internal satisfaction a relationship can never be healthy. Perhaps, it is for this reason that she does not encourage her sister to express her feelings to Bingley.

In Miss Austen's novels, we come across characters that exhibit faultless manners but harbor secret views and do not communicate their real intentions; neither do they share their internal conflicts with the others. It is through their actions that they reveal what philosophers call difference in private and public ethics.²⁷ Perhaps this is born out of fear of public disgrace or censure, or that people are not conscious of their lapses.²⁸ This makes them lead a dual life which eventually leads to internal suffering, as experienced by Jane, Elizabeth, and Darcy etc. According to Jones, "All roles have public aspects; all have private aspects" (603)²⁹, the one that becomes prominent according to the requirement, be it public or private is exhibited likewise.³⁰

The most harmless of all the characters in P & P, seems to be Jane Bennet who cannot think ill of anybody.³¹ Jane Bennet only confides to Elizabeth about her reaction after the Netherfield ball for she is happy and is in turn teased by her sister lovingly yet after being maltreated by the Bingley sisters and being ignored she feels embarrassed and prefers to hide her inner feelings. Though she tells Elizabeth that she is not deeply involved with Bingley and that he will only remain to be a person worthy to be remembered, yet, when he finally turns up in the end she is inwardly disturbed for she fears her own feelings that are still partial towards him.

Miss Bennet has not been able to hear of his coming, without changing colour. It was many months since she had mentioned his name to Elizabeth; but now, as soon as they were alone together, she said, 'I saw you look at me today, Lizzy, when my aunt told us of the present report; and I know I appeared distressed; but don't imagine it was from any silly cause. I was only confused for the moment, because I felt that I *should* be looked at. I do assure you that the news does not affect me either with pleasure or pain. I am glad of one thing, that he comes alone; because we shall see the less of him. Not that I am afraid of *myself*, but I dread other people's remarks (312).

Elizabeth listens to her without any remark for she trusted her, yet, she with her deep understanding knows that her sister is disturbed. Perhaps it is really the fear of the society yet one could not eliminate the possibility of Jane's own involvement. She might be at war with herself like Darcy in overcoming her feelings of love but seems to have more perseverance than him. To hide one's feeling runs through all the characters and Jane will later be shown to be the least hypocrite of all. Perhaps she is trying to preserve her graces and silence is her only tool. Her basic goodness makes her a loveable character and she seems to be the only one of her kind. Austen seems to regard her with a sisterly affection and is strongly reminded of her own sister Cassandra when one goes through her personal letters.

There are other characters, in the novel, that secretly nurture ill for others and lose no opportunity in bringing them harm. This lack of mutual love and understanding creates a vacuum in their emotional lives. As the novel progresses, we realize that had they been truthful in the communication of their feelings, they would have saved a lot of trouble for themselves. One such pathetic character turns out to be Miss Bingley who in her effort to secure Darcy's attention becomes jealous of Elizabeth only because he praises her. She deliberately tries to speak ill of her family "connections" and her lack of "refinement" as she has not acquired the superficial accomplishments necessary for young ladies in those days.³² Status consciousness and "connections" are Darcy's weakness but all her efforts unconsciously end up in confirming Darcy's love as he goes through a process of awareness. As a result "Miss Bingley was left to all the satisfaction for having forced him to say what gave no one any pain but herself" (254). Yet, she turns out to be a pitiable figure for she is but the victim of her environment where females' only concern is an "eligible match". The same happens to Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who never could tell Darcy, what she communicates to Elizabeth, for her pride would not allow hearing a

direct refusal at her face by her nephew with whom her daughter was engaged. One cannot but sympathize with her in the end as did Jane Austen and so makes her come to terms with Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. The novel educates the reader to the value of decorum of manners or morals through the characters and their behaviour, for they are of supreme importance when combined with intellectual thoughts and sincere motives. Those who behave recklessly and selfishly are the ones whom Austen leaves deprived of any domestic or social felicity e.g. Wickham in *P & P*, Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park* etc. Yet there are those who manage to live a happy life because they are able to see their weaknesses and try to amend them.

Amid this environment there are those who are striving for high social status. The face that they show in public is different from what they privately inspire, and they are busily involved in scheming to achieve their goals; as we see in the activities of Miss Bingley, Lady Catherine and even Charlotte Lucas. It's only Mrs. Bennet who gives voice to her wishes for "her mind was less difficult to develop" (3). It seems that being unconscious of the moral implications of her behaviour she has nothing to hide. At once made happy and distressed is her lot. At times one is led to sympathize with her scarcity of reason. The moment Elizabeth and Jane's wedding had given her reason to flaunt before her neighbours she is forgotten by the author.

Yet, there are those who are a victim of their insatiable desires. They are ambitious and selfish and would resort to any base activity to gain their ends. Struggling for survival they make blunders which when exposed cause them humiliation. In *P & P*, Wickham is seen on the hunt for a rich wife, during the course of his search, he meets many women with whom he flirts outrageously, and after learning about their financial situation not serving his purpose he discards

them because he lacks morals sense. He would resort to any villainy and yet proclaim innocent. He even tried to mar the Darcy family reputation; the family that had brought him up; for his selfish motives. We do not see any self reproach even though he is caught red handed.

Ironically, Wickham was brought up to become a clergyman and was sent to complete the required education but because of his sinful disposition he soon left it for he could not bear to live an ascetic life. A true follower of his desires he roams for opportunities. He buys off his future parish and spends the money on trivialities; owing to extravagant behaviour he is soon penniless and has no other option but to join the militia. His moral weakness makes him flaunt his good looks among the red-coats rather than hold reverence for the profession. He jilts women without any decency or decorum.

The residents of Longbourn fall a prey to his charms and even an intelligent girl like Elizabeth falls for him. It is only when he fails to come up to her intellectual level that she considers herself saved from his attractions. It is later that we realize that she was so dominated by Mr. Darcy's thoughts that there was no room for anyone. Mrs. Gardiner cautions Elizabeth against Wickham and she lightly tells her that she will pay heed to her advice of not encouraging a financially unprofitable relationship and suddenly uttering "Oh! *that* abominable Mr. Darcy!" (137), revealing that he is her ultimate obsession that she is not conscious of. Miss Austen exposes Wickham and his cunning schemes in the passage of the novel and in the end he is to suffer a life time punishment of being tormented by a foolish wife. Though married properly he is deprived of true happiness and Elizabeth wondered "how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their virtue" (293).

P & P deals with the appreciation of decorum, not of manners only but of actions, behaviour and soul that generates high ideals and decent thoughts. The presence of Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*, Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility*, becomes a balm to those in suffering, without revealing their own situations. Their strength of character portrays their morals and ethics. Even Emma Woodhouse, in *Emma*, acts foolishly, yet with a desire to promote the happiness of others. Her fault lies in her lack of knowledge of the meaning of happiness.

Living in the money-minded society she thinks finances as the basis of comfortable relationships and during her 'education' she has to learn that physical attributes and gains are not the necessary ingredients for a healthy relationship. These qualities combined with rational thoughts and good motives followed by good actions cause happiness and add substance to the character. For Mr. Callahan,

A good person, or a good enough person, should possess emotional literacy, mature self-discipline, cultivated intrapersonal sympathies, and a steadfast personal commitment to high moral standards of worth (Callahan. 25).³³

A healthy relationship is a sort of exchange of positive qualities between two individuals who complement each other and through this exchange acquire happiness.³⁴ This is what makes Mr. Darcy a better individual who is able to feel the misery of others beyond his own suffering and creating in Elizabeth the awareness to refrain from passing judgments without knowing the actual truth. She goes through a shift from complete confidence in her judgment from "one knows exactly what to think" (81) to "Till this moment I never knew myself" (196).³⁵

The moral values talked about in the public and taught in institutions were different from what people privately practiced and that is what made the people of that era hypocrites. Mr. Bennet makes fun of his wife's pleas when she begs him to be the first visitor at Netherfield

Park, “I will a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls”(2). Yet “Mr. Bennet was among the *earliest* [my italics] of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go” (3, 4). This well-timed visit shows that he is as eager as his wife in finding suitable husbands for his daughters though he would never admit it openly. Mr. Collins may talk of vice and virtue in the most pedantic way and pass judgments on the characters of others, yet, his own behaviour in no less faulty. Among those who are socially his equal he is at ease in showing his contempt of that which he dislikes, but among those who are his superiors he demeans himself much by flattery and pretended humility so much so that even the Bennet family wonders at him. Collins may profess of performing

those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England. As a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence (18).

But, the atmosphere of Longbourn becomes tense with his presence and it is only after he leaves that slowly they go back to their normal routine. The sole object of his desire in visiting the Bennet family is to promote his relations so far estranged, so as to have an excess to the gentry. He considers a marriage with one of the Bennet girls as most “advantageous” to his situation. He would go to any lowness in the pursuit of his wish, so much so, that his cousins make fun of him. In the performance of his religious duties he is more prone to please Lady Catherine than God. This hypocrisy disgusts the people around him and slowly they become indifferent to him. Later, when he advises Mr. Bennet through a letter, to “throw off your unworthy child from your affection forever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own hideous offence” (278) the author as well as the other characters in the novel ignore this letter, as if it had never arrived. Miss Austen refrains from passing the judgments of heaven or hell. In her novels,

those who do not act with propriety and show a deliberate deviation from propriety suffer according to the intensity or magnanimity of the crime committed, as well as the situation and limitations of the characters.³⁶

We do not see drastic or sudden changes in the behaviour of the characters of this novel. Some of them do become conscious of their faults e.g. as stated earlier Mr. Darcy simmers down from a snob to a gentle agreeable person who may yet dislike the Bennets' behaviour, but has learned to bear them with indifference.

Miss Austen's other female characters also live within the restrictions of their society yet they manage to reveal their moral strengths in the limited sphere of domesticity. Characters like Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* are apparently very submissive but they are not meek humble woman. They are quiet young women struggling on their own and within themselves to retain their self-integrity.³⁷ Men and women must learn to respect and esteem each other as individuals and on the basis of humanity for that is true ethics.

We still see people in pursuit of temporary happiness in the form of wealth and physical comfort considering them a part of human relationship; no matter how and where they may get it. We fail to realize the higher ideals of love, understanding and trust that enrich life and relationships. In this wild run they commit errors and become judgmental towards the others without realizing their own weaknesses. Lack of self assessment leads them to mental suffering and it is too late when realization dawns upon them. The new generation is not getting the proper guidance for parents and mentors have become infected too by the desire for worldly possessions. However the future is not bleak and there is still time to direct our energies towards higher goals. We must equip our children with noble ideals so as to achieve true happiness.

Notes

¹ Mary Poovey also comments on the ongoing change of Austen's society and considers it a "chaotic change" as she appreciates Austen's irony which she believes "resolve some of the most debilitating ideological contradictions of this period". p. xvii later she appreciates her "aesthetic solutions to the dilemmas" of her society.

² See p. 7, E. Rubinstein *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice* (London: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1969) and Nicholas Marsh *Jane Austen: The Novels* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1998), p. 12,13.

³ David Gallop *Jane Austen and the Aristotelian Ethic* Philosophy and Literature – Vol. 23, number 1, April 1999, p.96 also see John Ely, *Jane Austen: A Female Aristotelian* Thesis Eleven Sage Publications. 1995

⁴ See George Henry Lewes. *The Novels of Jane Austen* an unsigned article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. LXXXVI, July 1859 P.106

⁵ R. W. Chapman, *Jane Austen's Methods* Times Literary Supplement, Feb. 9, 1922. p.81.

⁶The term 'ethics' comes from the Greek word Ethos, means "character". '[It] is the systematic study of the nature of value concepts, "good", "bad", "ought", "right", "wrong", etc., and of the general principles which justify us in applying them to anything, also called "moral philosophy". Britannica, 725. Another interpretation of ethics is that, 'Ethics makes a systematic study of our moral ideals and goals, our motives of choice, and our patterns of good and bad conduct. It remains a science of right living, however, and not in itself a form of moral actions or practice.' The explanation further states that 'Ethics gives us some general practical knowledge, but we must still make personal decisions which apply this knowledge to our daily lives.' World Book, 374

The drama of ethics began when man decided according to his nature, being a social animal, to live in groups. What bounded him and his fellow humans was a desire to live collectively that gave birth to the idea of a family. This forced him to formulate laws according to which he would compromise his desires and comforts with those of the others. As a rational creature he knew that animal like freedom and uncontrolled reactions will results in conflict and that he can increase his power as well as ensure his safety against adverse forces only by making contracts of different types e.g., social, political, economic etc . The following books contain interesting information on life and moral state of people in Regency England Marjerie. Morgan, *Manners, morals, and class in England, 1774-1858*. (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc.1994). Venetia. Murray, *An Elegant Madness* (New York: Viking Penguin 1999). Sales, Roger. *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (New York: Routledge, 1994). White, R. J. *Life in Regency England* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1963).

⁷ Even Mr. Bennet, who is not interested in the education of his children realizes after Lydia's elopement "Who should suffer but myself...I ought to feel it" p. 280 . Elizabeth becomes a better person when she gets rid of her prejudices and Darcy learns that being rich does not mean he is right. He has to learn that others are equally important as humans.

⁸ The term is taken from Arthur E. Walzer *Rhetoric and Gender in Jane Austen's Persuasion* College English, Vol. 57, No. 6. (Oct., 1995), pp. 688-707. Stable URL:

<http://links.jstore.org/sici=0010-> Also see Booth. Wayne, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1961). Hugh Blair. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters* Ed. Harold E. Harding 2 vols.(Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965). Brody. Miriam, *Manly Writing: Gender, Rhetoric, and the Rise of Composition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991). Campbell. George, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Ed. Bitzer. Lloyd E. (1963). (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1988).

⁹ The Regency society of that time was divided into different classes and each class seemed to have its own moral standards. Miss Austen reveals this fact in her novels. The attitudes and thoughts of the upper and lower class towards values and morality were a world apart from each other, outwardly. If by chance they were to live together they had to make sacrifices and compromises because "...her world was divided and confused by contradictory social visions, large-scale political conflicts, and an ongoing redefinition of the ruling class" (Gunn, 404).

¹⁰ Here we see Jane Austen's own sympathetic views about the weaknesses of those around her. She gives concessions to human weaknesses but certainly would not approve of vanity, immorality of conduct, deceit and the like vices even if be in her minor or major characters, and for that the critics have compared her with Shakespeare in her delineation of all her characters.

¹¹ "Virtue, according to the utilitarian doctrine, is not naturally and originally part of the end, but it is capable of becoming so; and to those who live it disinterestedly it has become so, and it is desired and cherished, not as a means to happiness, but as a part of their happiness" (44). John Stuart Mill talks about concept of virtue in Utilitarianism in an extract printed in *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Richard B. Brandt, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1961). For Aristotle human virtue is 'not bodily excellence but goodness of the mind' .65 Aristotle *Ethics for English Readers*, translated by H. Rackham (Oxford: Basil Blackwell , Publisher, 1952) and reprinted in *and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Brandt. Richard B. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1961).

¹² See Rachlin. Howard *Science The of Self Control* (Boston: Harvard University Press 2000).

¹³ "A conscious self is a being for itself; that is, it is defined by a relation to something "other", and that other is in some way present to it. This self is aware, and in being aware of things that are other to it, it must implicitly be aware of itself as that which the others specifically are-not. A being that is for-itself, then, is always tacitly aware of itself in being aware of others, and it is explicitly a self-consciousness to the extent that this latent self-awareness does not remain latent, but becomes instead the direct object of its awareness. The completeness of its self-consciousness will vary with the adequacy of its comprehension of what it is. As a being for-itself, it is that in relation to which all that is other to it has a significant being; the being for-itself provides the defining context within which all the others figure, and how they figure is determined by how the self is. Thus, to comprehend adequately the self will be to comprehend it as the determining center that provides the orientation for the totality of being of which it is aware. The fundamental experience of being a-self, then, is freedom: the experience of being that in terms of which the other is defined" (158). John. Russon, *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004).

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10097293&ppg=173> (28.1.08)

¹⁴ Ronald A. Carson. *Sensibility and Rationality in Bioethics* The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 24, No. 3. (May-Jun., 1994), pp. 24-25. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093>
Also see, Turner. Tony, *Jane Austen* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd. 1986)

¹⁵ Mr. Richman believes that “we should take responsibility for the necessary consequences of our actions, but we are not doomed to depravity when we take fresh actions to undo the wrong we have done” (273). Richman. H. P., *Escapism: The Logical Basis of Ethics* Mind > New Series, Vol. 72, No. 286 (April, 1963) pp. 273-274. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0026>. Also see P. H. Nowell-Smith; E. J. Lemmon, *Escapism: The Logical Basis of Ethics* Mind > New Series, Vol. 69, No. 275 (Jul., 1960), pp. 289-300. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0026-30-1-08>

¹⁶ In those days more stress was laid on good manners to show off good breeding so books on good conduct were partially responsible in inculcating good behaviour rather than good thoughts, upright morality, sincerity and good actions. In schools as well as at homes where private tutoring was carried on, especially among those who could afford it, students were perfected in proper manners to behave faultlessly in the society i.e. before the others, rather than promoting intellectual thinking. True Christian morality became mere words that carried no meanings and were to be listened attentively without understanding on Sundays in the churches. Even these religious gatherings became more an occasion for social interaction than cleansing of thoughts, beliefs and promotion of upright ideals. In *Mansfield Park* Mrs. Rushworth shows her private family chapel, which was turning to ruins, to an uninterested group of young visitors how it was “formerly in constant use both morning and evening...But late Mr. Rushworth left it off” to which Miss Crawford says with a smile “Every generation has its improvement”. The conscientious Fanny considers it a ‘pity’ that the practice was abandoned while the worldly Miss Crawford thinks that the heads of the family avoided it and forced their servants to attend the assemblies which she disapproves. According to her “it is safer to leave people to their own devices on such subjects.....to choose their own time and manner of devotion” (*Mansfield Park* 88-89).

People were more concerned with looks, and a life of fun and ease was what all men and women aspired. As a result all their intellectual abilities were directed in the pursuit of such activities and gains.

¹⁷ Devlin believes that “education, for the Austen heroines, is a process through which they come to see clearly themselves and their contact, and by this new vision or insight become better people.” (1). Delvin D. D. *Jane Austen and Education* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1975).

¹⁸ For detail information on life of women in Austen’s times see Mews, Hazel. *Frail Vessels: Woman’s Role in Women’s Novels from Fanny Burney to George Eliot*. London: Athlone, 1969. Price, Richard. *Observations on Reversionary Payments: On Schemes for Providing Annuities for Widows, and for Persons in Old Age; On the Method of Calculating the Values of Assurances on Lives; and On the National Debt*. (London: 1771). Stone, Lawrence. *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England, 1660– 1857* (New York: Oxford University Press 1995). Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections*

on *Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life*, (London, 1787). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston, 1792). Alexander. William, *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time*. 2 vols. London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1779. Copeland, Edward. "What's a Competence? Jane Austen, Her Sister Novelists, and the 5%'s." *Modern Language Studies* 9 (1979): 161– 68. Leonore. Davidoff, and Hall. Catherine *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780– 1850*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) Douglas. Francis, *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage* Reprint (New York: Garland Press, 1984). *The Female Aegis; or, the Duties of Women from Childhood to Old Age, and in Most Situations of Life, Exemplified*. (London: 1798). Gisborne. Thomas, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: T. Cadell, 1797). Hayley, William. *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids* London: T. Cadell, 1785. Hays, Mary. *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women*. London, 1798. *The Laws Respecting Women: as They Regard Their Natural Rights, or Their Connections and Conduct*. (London: 1777). Malcomson. A. P. W., *The Pursuit of the Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland, 1750– 1820*, (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1982). Alexander, William. *The History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time* 2 Vols. (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1779).

¹⁹*Jane Austen's Rejection of Rousseau: A Novelistic and Feminist Initiation*
Papers on Language and Literature, Summer 1994 by Cohen. Paula Marantz
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3708/is_199407/ai_n8715547/pg_6 9-4-08

²⁰ The philosophy of Epicures is an attempt to understand the idea of a good life. It is also called Hedonism and according to it pleasure is the sole good.
"He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things [desires] will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of body and tranquility of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life" (Epicurus 23).

Epicures believed that "we ought to live a life of pleasure without suffering the effects that bring pain in life. For him there were two types of pleasures, dynamic and passive. He himself led an ascetic life so as to avoid pleasures that may bring pain in life e.g. too much of alcohol makes man sick. His philosophy though popular in his times was later rejected on the grounds that man does not always act to acquire physical pleasure; there are other motives too". This extract is taken from a letter of Epicurus quoted by Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by R. D. Hicks and printed in *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Richard B. Brandt . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1961. About the split between the private and public attitude in the eighteenth century Benedict writes in his article *Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* "This collapse of privacy and publicity also makes the later eighteenth century, when class, gender, and public culture became matters of general anxiety, newly significant"(619).

²¹See page 11,12 P & P.

²²As the author was not strictly a moralist, though considered by W. A. Craik who states, that Austen is a moralist "beyond dispute yet, it is plain that her characters and situations are not primarily vehicles of moral philosophy" (2) while Walter Allen thinks that the "main emphasis in her work is on manners, which she sees as morals in microcosm" (111). W. A. Craik, *Jane*

Austen; *The Six Novels*, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1965), p. 2. Allen. Walter, *The English Novel*. (London: Penguin Books Ltd. 1954), p. 111.

²³ Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey* makes a mess of her life by jilting James Moorland for the comparatively rich Captain Tilney who, conscious of the opportunity provided to him by his wealth, in turn, roams around flirting shamelessly, in the hope of a wealthier girl. Jane Austen does not approve this behaviour and so in the end Isabella is left demented, destitute and desperate.

²⁴ Miss Austen does not directly moralize on evils like hypocrisy, pretensions, greed and lies that ruled the society and all the vile arts that were in vogue yet she reveals them through the marriage contracts that were transacted. The aristocracy was losing wealth and power, desperately trying to re-establish themselves in the changing social order and so we see Miss Elliot in *Persuasion* delaying her marriage till “one day or other, marry suitably.”⁶ i.e. when she gets hold of a wealthy gentleman while her father refuses Captain Wentworth when he asks for Anne Elliot’s hand, saying it should never be, gave it all the negative of great astonishment, great coldness, great silence, and a professed resolution of doing nothing for his daughter” (25) for being not rich enough, and considering it a “degrading alliance”. Attitude like this resulted in loss of peace of mind for we see Anne Elliot alienating herself from all happiness. Marriages based on material profits promoted dissatisfaction and lack of trust as we see the tragic separation between Maria Bertram and Mr. Rushworth in *Mansfield Park*. In *Lady Susan* the novelist seems to be very aggressive in her reaction against such relationships and so we feel relieved when Frederica finds independence from her greedy mother.

²⁵ See p.100-104 in *Pride and Prejudice* In *A Memoir of Jane Austen* we learn that, ‘In her youth she had declined the addresses of a gentleman who had the recommendations of good character, and connections, and position in life, of everything, in fact, except the subtle power of touching her heart.’ (28). Austen-Leigh. James Edward - author, Chapman. R. W. editor *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. (London: Richard Bentley and Son 1871).

²⁶ Brandt relates that with the advent of Christ, a whole new set of beliefs was formed known as Christian ethics. It offers consolation to man by pointing out and listing the good and bad things. They believe that life ought to be led according to the rules ordained by God. These views effected the western world and with the passage of time their emerged different sects which argued about the difference between right and wrong and presented their own views e.g. Fundamentalists believed in word of bible as words of God, Catholics considered church as vicar of God and Protestants believed in a personal relationship with God, for them the conscience was to decide what was right and what was wrong. With the protestant ideals came a change all over Britain as regard to morality hence a direct contact between man and God was much discussed. In the seventeenth century came Spinoza, a determinist who believed in law of nature and a relativist for he promoted the idea that nothing was good or bad in itself but it is so in relation to someone. According to him it was futile to struggle against that which was bound to happen. Brandt. Richard B. *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. 1961).

²⁷ For detail see Plato *Euthyphro*, in *Plato, Plato on the Trial and Death of Socrates*. Translated by Lane Cooper, (New York: Cornel University Press 1994).

Also see H.H. Joachim. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Alison believes that Austen uses the notions of love and justice among her characters according to Aristotelian practical morality. Searle, Alison. *The Moral Imagination: Biblical Imperatives, Narrative and Hermeneutics in Pride and Prejudice*.: Renascence; Fall 2006, Vol. 59 Issue 1, p17-32, 16p <http://search.ebscohost.com> Baruch De Spinoza *Baruch Spinoza: The Complete Works*. Edited by Michael L. Morgan and translated by Samuel Shirley. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

David Hume *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* A Critical Edition Edited by Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon Press) Kant. Immanuel *Critic of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, translated by L. W. Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

²⁸C. G. Jung tries to give a psychological reason for those who hide their true self under the cover of good manners. “we neither see nor want to understand what we ourselves are doing, under the cover of good manners” (73). Jung. Carl G., *Man and his Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing 1964) retrieved from internet on 21-2-08

²⁹W. T. Jones discusses in his essay how differently we behave in different situations. *Public Roles, Private Roles, and Differential Moral Assessments of Role Performance Ethics* > Vol. 94, No. 4 (Jul., 1984), Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0014>

³⁰“The separation between public and private spheres in the long eighteenth century is dead. This is a truth universally acknowledged in Restoration and eighteenth-century studies this year. It colors examination of genre, gender, history, and textual production and reception, and accounts for the number of books that make obtuse information, paratextual material, quirky pockets of sociability and personal and professional practices, and accounts of travel key in eighteenth-century culture. ...this collapse of privacy and publicity makes the later eighteenth century, when class, gender and public culture became matters of general anxiety, newly significant.” 619 Benedict. Barbara M. *Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* > Vol. 42, No. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 2002), pp. 619-664 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0039->

³¹Jane Bennet can be compared to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* for her reticence Eva T.H. Brann thinks that Fanny is not a meek ‘goody, goody’ girl but a ‘reticently spirited young woman struggling within herself to be good.’ 817. ³¹ Eva T. H. Brann, *Aristotle from a Woman’s Perspective* Review of Politics Vol. 58 No. 4 1996. Also see Ruderman. Anne Crippin: *The Pleasures of Virtue: Political thoughts in the Novels of Jane Austen*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. 1995).

³² ‘Dancing, drawing, and musical performance were considered more useful than the development of critical thinking skills and common sense in the young woman; the expectation was that the former would more readily attract eligible young men. Learning to enhance one’s beauty to lure as many potential suitors as possible was thought more important than learning skills that might enable a woman of the gentry or aristocracy to support herself financially in the future.’ Pg. 110 Teachman, Debra. *Understanding Pride & Prejudice : A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources & Historical Documents* Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, 1997 <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10002002&ppg=126>

³³ Sidney Callahan. *Ethical Expertise and Personal Character* The Hastings Centre Report, Vol. 24, No. 3 (May- June, 1994. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093>.

³⁴ 'In her youth she had declined the addresses of a gentleman who had the recommendations of good character, and connections, and position in life, of everything, in fact, except the subtle power of touching her heart.' 28 this proves her preference regarding marriage. James Edward Austen-Leigh *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. Contributors: James Edward Austen-Leigh - author, Chapman. R. W. - editor. (London: Richard Bentley and Son. 1871)

³⁵ These lines strangely echo Gloucester in Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear*, who goes through a process of self-realization through his sufferings, being disillusioned by the behaviour of his illegitimate son, "I stumbled when I saw" (Act. IV. Sc. I), and is able to see with the inward eye the reality so far hidden.

³⁶ Jane Austen seems to know a lot about human nature. She was perhaps more concerned on promoting 'goodness' through 'forgiveness' and patience. In Austen's world "values are relative, in which telling a polite lie is sometimes a more moral act than keeping to upright silence"(37). Yet lie and deceit are different. (Mooneyham.37)

³⁷ In his article "*Firm as a rock in her own Principals*": (*But not Necessarily a Kantian*) Loudon questions Fanny's courageously humble person as Kant envisions it a virtue for whether it was based on moral principals or selfish motive. The article argues that given the documented interest of German philosopher Immanuel Kant's interest in English novels, it is possible that Kant would have welcomed author Jane Austen's novel "Mansfield Park" as a valuable source of insight into human nature. It examines whether courage, as understood by Kant, is an aspect of humility, and whether Fanny Price, the novel's heroine, is a courageously humble person in the Kantian sense, particularly, whether or not Fanny is a morally virtuous person according to Kant's ethics. Loudon, Robert B. *Social Theory and Practice*, Oct. 2007, Vol. 33 Issue 4. <mailto:louden@maine.edu> retrieved on 23-1-08.

Chapter Two

Threadbare Morality and the Challenges of the New World

“Threadbare morality” (56) in *Pride and Prejudice*¹ is an expression used for Mary who is fixated on the texts of moral writers, and philosophizes everything unnecessarily.² Though Jane Austen comments on Mary’s preoccupation with “deep study of thorough bass and human nature” (56), she is not judgmental in her remarks. Mary Bennet lives in an almost isolated cocoon, and is couched comfortably in her world of moral philosophy. Her sisters, on the other hand, engage themselves with active participation in the social events around them. They enjoy their life and gossip about the affairs of the regiment and the activities of their neighbours. The Bennets do not take Mary’s sporadic moral pronouncements seriously. Apparently she is happy and satisfied in her limited world. Only occasionally does she show resentment and bitterness against others. She does not take into account what others say or feel about her beliefs. She disapproves of the manners of others; no one, however, takes her hollow words seriously. As a result, she is alienated and isolated from the world around her.

Mr. Collins and Mary are quite similar in their ethical views and pedantic disposition. Ironically there is hardly any conversation between the two. Though Mary holds him in high reverence, she believes that he is “by no means so clever as herself” (119). On the other hand, she believes that there is room for improvement in him and that he can become “a very agreeable partner” (119). Mr. Collins ignores her when he considers proposing to different young ladies—something contrary to Mary’s hopes and expectations. He does not think very highly of her or any of his other cousins for that matter. He changes from “Jane to Elizabeth” (66) in no time, but the thought of proposing to Mary after Elizabeth refuses his hand does not cross his mind.

And if Mrs. Bennet entertains the idea of marrying Mary off to Collins, it is not due to mental affinity between the two; she wants to dispose off a daughter. Mary and Collins both have a very superficial and bookish view of morality. The moral principles they hold so dear to their heart are far from reality. Both fail to act on what they preach to others.

Both Mary and Collins are self-centered and pretentious. Both are deficient in the ability to understand human frailties; they fail to sympathize with others. Mr. Collins luckily finds a potential fulfillment of his cherished ideals in the person of Charlotte Lucas, who possesses a realistic approach to life and has good enough patience to endure his high claims. She handles his eccentricities well due to her self-control. Her marriage to Collins is a conscious contract of relationship. This is why Elizabeth detects a “faint blush” (148) of Charlotte’s morals, but that does not last long. In order to rescue her familial sanctity she gives many silent sacrifices; she does not share her feeling with her best friend, Elizabeth. All she does is blush. But then these “blushes seem sometimes to work as natural and involuntary signals of embarrassment, vexation, anger or love. Jane Bennet, for example, blushes at the warmth of her inner feelings for Bingley though verbally denying their strength” (Farrell 128). These blushes are a substitute for what they fail to do—express their feelings! They would rather suffer but not say anything about what they go through.

Women in Austen’s *P & P* make compromises only because they want to be acceptable to the community/society which attaches so much importance to woman’s silence. A good woman suffers but would not express her feelings. This is why blushes replace comments and complaints. They fail to understand that openly talking about sexual and conjugal issues can prevent painful and embarrassing moments and deeds. Wickham’s “immoral habits” (196), which later Darcy mentions to Elizabeth, are a good example of this. This society would rather

keep quiet about such deeds in utter disregard of how these acts might bring serious consequences. Even a person like Elizabeth who otherwise openly expresses herself, keeps quiet thinking that it “will ruin [Wickham socially] forever” (312).³

Contrary to this we hear Mary and Collins openly criticize Lydia’s behaviour and judge her as “naturally bad” (278). Collins advises Mr. Bennet to “leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence” (278). His attitude lacks the human element of taking into account how Lydia might be innocent. Nor does he give any benefit of doubt to her as to how she would not have eloped with Wickham had she known the type of person that Wickham is. For her it is a “good joke” (273). Collins pushes Lydia out of the acceptable social domain. He demonizes her and criminalizes her act—“heinous offence” (278). Mary, on the other hand, is not as harsh as Collins. Her attitude towards Lydia, however, marginalizes her: she is less of a sister after the elopement episode.

Mary thinks very highly of herself from moral point of view; she considers herself the epitome of virtue. And that has made her arrogant and unforgiving: Collins and Mary are alike in this. Both fail to realize that the gap between the ideal principles they so adamantly adhere to and the reality is difficult to bridge. That people will continue to fall short of the ideal; they will continue to make mistakes both voluntarily and involuntarily. But that pushing them out of the pale of humanity or/and society is not a desirable thing to do. They fail to understand that people learn lessons from life and acquire wisdom through their deeds, and that they change for better. Collins and Mary’s failure to understand these issues has stagnated and petrified them in their threadbare morality. Both remain the same through the action of the novel, and judge others on standards which perhaps they themselves will fail.

Collins and Mary are strict moralists, which not only makes them the most boring people it also alienates them from the social circle around them: nobody wants to be friends with them. The Bennets do not pay much attention to Collins. They in fact ignore him. If at all they do, they ridicule him. Darcy completely ignores Collins even though he mentions Darcy's aunt, Lady De Bourgh several times as to how Collins knows her. He makes a fool out of himself in the presence of the aristocrats, and behaves in a manner as if he fears them more than he fears God.

Collins is a church functionary; hence a religious man. We do not expect him to be impressed by worldly wealth or status for this is transitory aspect of life. He never aims at values that provide eternal happiness. He never talks of the advantages of a sound mind and inner peace. As a church functionary we further expect him to have a good influence on his cousins but no intimacy exists. He keeps a certain distance with all of them and his superficial modesty is so revealing that they never become familiar to him. Even the modest and friendly Jane fails to befriend him. He is dissatisfied at the way his cousins act and when Lydia interrupts him while he is reading a passage from Fordyce's Sermons after rejecting a novel he expresses his displeasure,

I have often observed how little young ladies are interested by books of a serious stamp, though written solely for their benefit. It amazes me, I confess; - for certainly, there can be nothing so advantageous to them as instruction (64).

Quite ironically he never dwells on these "advantages;" nor does he state the benefit of "instruction" which becomes a vague abstraction and not a realistic proposal. His sermons are not original; they are extracts from someone else's writings. Perhaps that is why they are ineffective and boring. He only gives lip service to what he preaches; he never acts on what he

recommends to others. His language and words are hollow and bombastic—mere big words without much of a meaning in them.

Mr. Collins' first letter to the Bennet family reveals the superficiality of his conviction. The words that he uses to convey his regard for them are hollow and meaningless.

I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, widow of Sir Lewis de Bourgh, whose bounty and magnificence has preferred me to the valuable rectory of this parish, where it shall be my earnest endeavour to *demean* [my italics] with grateful respect towards her Ladyship, and be ever ready to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England" (58).

His language lacks depth and sincerity. Instead of claiming love and familial ties he tries to impress them by mentioning his own success. The letter is full of "I"s and "my"s which reveals his obsession with his own self. He has acquired the language of the religious scholars who taught him in the college he attended for his degree. He uses flowery language without much of a thought in and behind it. He speaks and uses a language which common people do not understand. Perhaps it is due to clergymen like Collins and their adherence to the kind of language they speak and write that the common people are mostly ignorant of the spirit of their religion. Religion was thus the prerogative of the rich and wealthy and beyond the reach of common men and women so even those who attended church regularly learned little of it because of the manner in which sermons were delivered.⁴

Mr. Collins is the kind of a person who would give a sermon to scores of people but would not physically help any individual no matter what though he claims that being "a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessings of peace in all families within the reach of my influence" (58). Contrary to his claim Elizabeth observes during her visit to Rosings that Collins lived to oblige and "demean" himself before the formidable

Lady Catherine. He spends his time “reading and writing, and looking out of the window in his own bookroom, which fronted the road” to see “what carriages went along, and how often especially Miss de Bourgh drove by in her phaeton” (159).

Having a limited view of life his sermons carried the same ineffective impressions. The speeches that he makes are not aimed to dissuade people from doing wrong. He does not impress upon them that such behaviour is socially harmful, but tries to frighten them by stressing on God’s wrath. Such sermons frighten people to abstain from sins and immoral conduct for fear of punishment alone. The flock is not made aware of the consequences that they might suffer due to immorality in their daily life; that it would harm their relationships and mar their characters, alienating them from their fellow human beings. People are not acquainted with facts but kept in ambiguities from across-the-border realities. That is why the moment the common men and women are out of the church they forget all the lessons of good ethics and beliefs. They immediately indulge in the scheduled activities of day to day life for that is what they seem to understand.

People like Collins are not conscious of the true spirit of religious and social responsibilities. Instead of ensuring to follow and act on the religious principles, they are busy in the pursuit of their worldly acquisitions. Their lack of commitment and sincerity to their moral principles exposes them as hollow individuals who assume moral superiority by giving lip service to some ideal moral principles. Traditionally considered shepherds of the flock such clergymen forget their duty of redeeming the soul. Collins’ life revolves around winning Lady Catherine’s approval which is why we see constant references and appreciation of her wealth and status. The continuous reminder of her condescension shows his own pettiness for he lives in

fear of losing her favour. To become socially acceptable to the circle of the aristocrats he becomes a parasite who lives on grants.

Though there are characters in the novel that are morally superior to others yet we do not meet “moral saints”⁵ in Austen’s novels. She sometimes seems to indirectly cross-section Collins and in this way she exposes the evil practices of her society that were subtly harming the minds of the people by keeping them ignorant. Austen thus proves a harbinger of practical and personal salvation and becomes an instrument of augury for her society. She seem to dread the threat that religion might become if people do not become conscious of what the likes of Collins and the institutions that they represent whom Jung calls “educational monstrosities”⁶ would do, because the tool that they have make them more dangerous than ignorant people. The reader is led to recognize that ill feelings or misunderstandings are mostly the cause of strife among the members of society so they must be duly recognized and hence redressed.

There are no strict moral statements in the novel⁷. Even the emotional state of the characters does not cross the limits of decency to which Miss Charlotte Bronte objects in her criticism of Jane Austen, as stated earlier. The arguments between the characters, no matter how heated, never cross the limits of propriety and decency. There is not a single passionate scene, action or dialogue in the novel, yet it successfully conveys the intensity of human emotions in a very dignified way. The reason might be the refinement of Austen’s immediate family and her characters bears a stamp of it.

Elizabeth and Darcy never voice their own suffering; rather they keep a strict control over their language which adds grace and equanimity to their behaviour, hence earning the regard of the reader. The clash between the two characters in the proposal scene is an example to this. Here is positioned the art of Miss Austen. She adds grace even to her suffering characters.

Though Collins is deeply offended at Elizabeth's refusal to his proposal, he does not become violent. With great control he does not show a violent reaction after being refused by Elizabeth. All he says to Mrs. Bennet's pleadings of reconsideration is that "it were better not to force her into accepting me, because if liable to such defects of temper, she could not contribute much to my felicity" (105). He accepts Elizabeth's refusal with a heavy heart; no violent scene is created and the matter of his marriage resolves very quietly and quite reasonably. It is only Mrs. Bennet that we see making a fuss because when she is "discontented, she fancied herself nervous" (3). Mrs. Bennet's philosophy, if she is supposed to have any is that "those who do not complain are never pitied" (108).

The protagonists in the novel are conscious of the worth and value of moral "goodness" hence those who do not prefer wealth and status over contentment achieve contentment. Wickham is doomed to suffer dissatisfaction and Charlotte Lucas is condemned to live with her "blush" (148), for the choice they made is consciously done. They have staked their moral obligation over physical comforts without realizing the consequences. Substantially they lose human values and bruise themselves ethically as they have degraded themselves to achieve comfort at the expense of peace of mind. Materialistically expedient, they become spiritually bankrupt. They have been led by the demands of the society without daring to come into conflict with its unreasonable expectations. Mooneyham believes that "the central conflict in each novel is between the hero and heroine; their moral, intellectual and linguistic opposition defines the progress of education and growth" (ix). But it is not always so, for it is not only the hero or heroine that are in a state of conflict rather the whole functional world and its people that contribute to social progression are at variance, so they go through the process of education for social realization. An individual's realization is but a step towards higher social awareness. It's

a moment that triggers a movement towards truth. They make erroneous judgments and experience the repercussions but it is through these experiences that they become capable of rectifying their wrong conceptions. Elizabeth might have lost Darcy for good if she has not realized that her assumptions were based on prejudice so unreasonable.

In P & P, the fallible characters are victims of their educational environment too. Class differences are exhibited in the behaviour of the people but we observe that the people belonging to the same class differ in their behaviour too on the basis of educational background. Those who receive private education behave differently from those who have had public education in formal institutions. Those with private education seem to be more liberal in their views regarding others while those who have attended public seminaries exhibit a different approach to life by adhering to worn out beliefs. The stark difference can be seen between the Bennet girls and the Bingley sisters. The latter know how to read and write and would compliment on the art of writing and reading. Their foremost consideration is making additions to their “family library” in order to add to the “beauties” (34) of their houses; they rarely practically apply to life what they read. On the other hand, the former pride themselves in being “encouraged to read” if they “wished to learn” (156), i.e., learn about life and others. Bingley wishes he has as big a library as that of Mr. Darcy’s but never expresses a desire to read the books he wants to collect. His “books” are more for show than use.

Similarly the Bingley sisters are educated, but their education has not helped them much. They have not learnt from their knowledge how to appreciate, understand life and people living around them. This is perhaps why they are snobbish. For them, the important things are appearance and show rather than acting on what they learn. They have acquired the “knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and modern languages” (35, 36), but do not make use of

these skills. Experts in the art of social rhetoric they fail to value matters of heart and humanity.

The children of Mr. Bertram, in *Mansfield Park*⁸ also fail to come up to their father's

expectations though he tries his best to provide them the best of education, and he later regrets:

Here had been grievous mismanagement.... He feared that principle, active principle, had been wanting, that they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice (M P 477).

We note that the older generation fails to set fine models. They do not help their children to adjust to the modern requirements. They are stuck in time while the society and its ethos move ahead. Lost in the pursuit of material and apparent things, they have lost sight of how to focus on the character building of their children. The result is that the children grow as a true copy of their parents. Mr. Bennet shares the total neglect of his daughters' education with Mr. Bertram in M P, while Mrs. Bennet's constant reference to wealth in marriage as only source of achieving happiness spoils her younger daughters' concepts of a good life. The children learn from their parents that a happy marriage revolves around riches; not around mutual respect and understanding. That is precisely why the children continue to pursue in life what they saw their parents do. No wonder Mary Bartram marries the rich Mr. Rushworth even though she does not like him because he is "an inferior young man, as ignorant in business as in books, with opinions in general unfixed, and without seeming much aware of himself" (M P 204). Still she hopes to "find consolation in fortune and consequences, bustle and world" (M P 207).

Such people measure happiness through the amount of riches a person possesses no matter how unsocial or even inhuman. Happiness is measured with parameters of the amount of money i.e. the number of pounds a person may acquire or earn. For the common people Mr. Bingley is attractive and considered a good match because of his five-thousand-a-year income.

His big house and his chaise-and-four make him a better eligible bachelor than his intelligence and integrity. Similarly Mr. Darcy, who earns double the amount that Bingley has, is considered better than Bingley in the beginning. People's opinion, however, changes about him afterwards. He is a little too subtle and intelligent for the shallow people that surround him.

This is not to say that all the characters lack moral standard and integrity. The elder Bennet sisters do display graces and decorum in their behaviour and manners. One wonders why they are different than their younger sisters. It may not be inappropriate to say that the monotony and indifference that their parents develop between themselves after the first few years of their marriage seeps into the upbringing of the younger sisters. Mr. Bennet seeks refuge in books from his responsibilities; the daughters are left to the silly Mrs. Bennet, who married for material comfort. Her husband on the other hand had married her because he was "captivated by youth and beauty" (222). That is to say both overlooked the inner being in each other, and pursued what apparently appealed to their senses. The elder Miss Bennets are a combination of poise and graces; the younger two are stupid; the middle daughter, Mary stands firmly in the middle as if not knowing where to belong. She is a product of too much consciousness; her beliefs are rigid and border inhumanity. Disdainful to all worldly pursuits, she considers herself far above the others and is superficially submerged in the world of religion. She is too arrogant and self-centered to socialize with neighbors. And when she does, she believes she does them a favor saying that, "I think it no sacrifice to join occasionally in evening engagements. Society has claims on us all; and I profess myself one of those who consider intervals of recreation and amusement as desirable for everybody" (82). When she goes there she makes a poor show of her abilities that fall short of the requirement of the society, but she does not realize that she makes a fool out of herself. Her intense consciousness makes her almost rigid and inflexible.

People like Lady de Bourgh, and Mary get along very well with the usual professors of religion like Collins. Both serve each other's purpose, and make a natural pair. Perhaps this is why they end up in some sort of a bond or relationship. These people exist on superficial and physical levels and that is exactly how they approach everything in life including religion. They give lip service to religion to satisfy their superficial self; their real self revolves around social convenience and material gain. Perhaps this is why the clergy and the conventional rich of the society get along very well; both scratch each other's back. Morality, as we understand in *P & P*, is thus not strictly a matter related to religious conventions for people like these. Religion for them is a tool, and morality a means to their end. That is, to have a materially comfortable and socially acceptable life no matter what. These people have knowledge of their religion without the resolve to act on it. They do not understand or perhaps do not want to understand that the mere knowledge and superficial practice of religion alone do not make people virtuous, morally good, and humane. Faithfully performing all the religious rituals does not necessarily make one good or moral. These people fail to understand that the rituals are meant to expand their mental horizon so that they can reach out to others around them. Going to the Sunday church is not only for singing hymns but to learn how the congregation can converge on the productive and efficient use of their resources and energy for the betterment of one another and the community—something in which the professors of religion are least interested.

Austen seems to synthesize “feelings with conventional morality”.⁹ The way some of her characters behave shows that. For example, Jane's ideals of silence and control seem to belong to the older traditions while Elizabeth's vocalization of her opinions represent the modern times. Both the sisters have difference of opinion about a variety of things but it never develops into an argument. Not because they don't care or are indifferent to the issue in question but

because they have a good understanding of each other's temperament. Both believe in goodness as the ultimate truth of life. "Good" for them is not necessarily something which might be socially desirable; it is something which does not harm another person in any sense of the word. Miss Austen's social ideology sometimes resembles Hume when he says, "It must, indeed, be confessed, that by doing good only, can a man truly enjoy the advantages of being eminent" (Hume 251).¹⁰

The relationship between Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh reminds one of the age-old dynamics between church and monarchy¹¹; both exploited and continue to exploit the proverbial common man and woman for their own vested interests. This brings us to a clear divide among the characters in *P & P*: one type gives lip service to religion which they use as a tool to exploit others. The other type rationally approaches life and appreciates life and people around them. They have a clear understanding of what the first type of people do to others, but never stand up to them or confront them except when their own interest is involved. In a way the second type, led by Elizabeth and Darcy, are accomplices in the mediocrity and hypocrisy of the first kind. The latter are however different than the former in being aware and conscious of what happens around them; the former are not.

While Darcy and Elizabeth are on the path towards self-realization where they will meet their true self and acknowledge their dark sides, Mary and people like her are not. Mary, in fact, is so alienated from the rest of the world that there is not much of a chance for her to learn from and about life and others. Lost and submerged in reading sermons she tries to impress others by speaking a language which is not hers. When Lydia elopes the whole family is heartbroken and subdued to silence but Mary speaks out her feelings in the following words.

Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we must draw from it this useful lesson: loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable—that one false step involves her in endless ruin—that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful; and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex (270, 71).

Her “moral extractions from the evil before them” (271) are not taken seriously by anyone around her. Distant and remote from life, people ignore her and do not heed to what she says. What to speak of others, Mr. Collins, her spiritual next of kin, does not utter a word of praise for her despite the fact that she holds him in high esteem. No wonder she is in a state of limbo and utterly lacks flexibility.

The likes of Collins and Mary represent the social life that is dominated by religion in *P & P*. Their counterparts like Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton in *Emma*; and Edward Bertram, the protagonist of *M P*, avoid thinking about moral pronouncements. They do not have the capacity to do that or the ability to deal with the complications that might arise due to addressing moral issue. Life for such people is easy so long as the material comfort they seek is available to them. They would rather live without stress and complexity than get involved in matters that may lead to arguments and discussions. Sir Lucas never argues with Collins on any subject. He visits Rosings with Elizabeth and Collins on the invitation of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He is dumb struck by the wealth and dominance of the Lady’s personality and there is hardly any conversation between him and the Lady let alone a discussion. He appreciates the food and agrees to all that the lady has to say, but does not take part in the conversation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine. He exhibits lack of self-integrity and seems to be perfectly satisfied with his life.

It is an eternal human struggle to make life honourable and achieve happiness though both are relative. The concept of happiness and honor varies from person to person; community

to community; and generation to generation. These phenomena of “true” happiness are as much social as psychological; Collins, Mary, Mr. Weston and the like are “happy” in their life and with themselves as much as Elizabeth, Darcy and their kind are with themselves and their lives.

The perception of true happiness among characters in *P & P* is divergent. They confuse personal and collective happiness with each other. The former with them is prior to the latter, which is why they come across as selfish people. A society like this potentially heads for a social break down—something which is obvious from the relationship that the Bennets have among themselves. The institution that is supposed to hold them together—church—has failed them. The church-goers give the same lip service to religion which the clergymen do. Ironically the church brings its followers together on a weekly basis, but only physically, exactly the same way as the institution of marriage does. In this Austen raises very serious moral questions facing not only her society but others as well irrespective of time and space.

As they fail to experience the joys of collective happiness it spoils their spiritual lives. They involve in self-interested schemes to achieve individual pleasure. Only those who are able to see beyond self-interest achieve true happiness. Lydia has no regard for her elder sister’s tears when she is leaving for Brighton, because she is completely engrossed in her own happiness. Kitty, with whom she has a lot in common, becomes almost a stranger when she is rallying in her own happiness. This selfishness is common and we at times keep a show of friendship though we are tempted to pull each other’s legs to achieve our own end.

Ironically sometimes this makes us so self possessed with our own interests that there is no intrusion into the affairs of other people. This keeps the social set up peaceful as happens in the world of *P & P*. A superficial harmony is maintained imperceptibly through hypocrisy because all agree on one point and that is the desire for social acceptability. At times they even

bargain it at a high price by making emotional, psychological and mental sacrifices. Collins and Charlotte's marriage is one such example. For them the means are more important than the end.

The ones who aspire for this superficial life live an inner fragmented life. Wickham suffers from lack of self-contentment which makes him commit errors. We realize the actual value and worth of an object only when we achieve it. We suffer disappointments for we have made sacrifices for these achievements, as is the case with Charlotte Lucas. The realization of the futility of such sacrifices dawns on us when it is too late for then there is no retracing. In reality there are possibilities of undoing the wrongs that one is led to commit but generally the fear of being labeled stops us short. Matter of honour and guilt are huge hurdles and only few have the courage to cross it as does Darcy and Elizabeth.

Mr. Bertram in *M P* and Mr. Bennet in *P & P* are both conscious of their faults in the brought-up of their children; with regard to training and grooming, and are ashamed. They realize their own part in the harm that is done. They go through a transformation in their concept of ethics and values. Mr. Bennet realizes that he should have been a little more vigilant towards the moral education of his children, and, Mr. Bertram learns that his extreme postures regarding worldly education have made his children morally deficient. Not only is this remorse felt by the elders but by the young generation too for they also come to realize their own mistakes. D.

Devlin comments on Mary Crawford in *M P*, in the following words:

When Mary moves from 'ill-bred' to 'wrong' she moves from manners as 'good-breeding' to manners as 'conduct', from the world of Chesterfield to the world of Locke and Johnson; she knows how close she is to being educated by her love for her tutor Edmund into a clearer knowledge of herself and others. But it is too late (122).

Those that claim to be at the helm of affairs, like Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are seen pointing fingers at others but the abysmal state of their own morals is shaky enough to

make precedence for others; and so the whole social structure represents a confused milieu. People with weak determination and resolves are afraid of redressing others for they are unable to hold a reflective mirror to those who are wrong but powerful and influential. Darcy suffers this fate because he is never made to realize that he can be wrong. He is used to being praised. Bingley almost worships him and relies on his judgment even in the matters of heart. Col. Fitzwilliam, Darcy's cousin appreciates him and trusts him to the extent of allowing him to "arrange the business just as he pleases" (172) without any argument. Darcy's servants tell Elizabeth that he is the "best landlord and the best master" (232) and even Elizabeth at one time says that "'Mr. Darcy has no defect" (53). Even Wickham informs Elizabeth that Darcy "chuses that every one connected with him should have an understanding of the first class" (79). Though the people of Hertfordshire consider Mr. Darcy rude and a snob they are afraid to tell him yet it is Mr. Darcy's self-realization triggered by Elizabeth that makes him conscious of his blemishes and consequently humanizes him; making him a lovable character.

Mr. Darcy never lacks substance even in his most snobbish state. When he is shocked at Mrs. Bennet's behaviour the reader understands his state of mind and wonders why Elizabeth is not trying to check her mother in her excesses. The reader does appreciate Darcy's ethical beliefs in comparison with the behaviour of the Bennet family and we acknowledge the strength of his character though he is proud and rude at times. He remains a commendable character with all his weaknesses; his social limitations.

He has to recognize that though physical comforts are essential to life, these are subservient to other more essential considerations viz. mental satisfaction, dignity, propriety and grace. For Elizabeth the foremost consideration is not Darcy's wealth; she is well aware of his status. Had this been not the case, she would have followed the lead of the prevailing mentality

and would have accepted him when he proposed for the first time. Even today, in our own society we see this awareness developing in our youth and they are learning to admire the true virtue of sincerity and love rather than riches. The desire of worldly possessions has been eternally present in all societies but few manage to realize the futility of this transitory pursuit. Here we observe that Austen's novels are not mouthpieces of superficial considerations of her time. They are channels through which we are able to realize how relationships based on material gains can harm characters and consequently the society. Those, eligible for noble consideration and possessing a full realization of all human fallibilities manage to form a sublime relationship based on deep rooted noble ideals. It is when hearts and minds are open that we are able to understand the others. Darcy has to liberate himself from confined ideals so as to understand Elizabeth and all that she represents. Possessing brittle personas will only result in fragmentation of personality for it is the flexibility of understanding that helps us live contentedly.

Wealth and status can never be the criteria for happiness. Lady Catherine and her daughter are two discontented solitary beings. There is no understanding between the mother and the daughter. We never meet them in a lively mood. Their wealth fails to provide them happiness. Living within one's means and avoiding wastage saves one from many embarrassments. Certainly, the Austen novels do not seem to hail meager means as criteria of true happiness. Though desires are incessant and unfulfilled desires might sadden a person temporarily yet it is the inner contentment that gives longer lasting peace of mind. The dominant note is wastage of money and wasteful activities and we see this when Mr. Bennet is in need of money he has none. It is then that he regrets his expenditures. He "had very often wished, before this period of his life, that, instead of spending his whole income, he had laid by an annual

sum, for the better provision of his children, and his wife, if she survived him. He now wished it more than ever” (289). In comparison to him Mr. Gardiner who is tradesman by profession shows resourcefulness, responsibility and provides finances; hence manages to solve Lydia’s affair. On the other hand in *Sense and Sensibility* Elinor gives us a very fine idea of happiness which satisfies the mind and the soul: “I wish as well as everybody else to be perfectly happy; but like everybody else it must be my own way. Greatness will not make me so” (87). What she means perhaps, is, that happiness has nothing to do with money or social status, that happiness is a soulful unification of the realities of life outside ones entity no matter how grisly they may be.

A balanced approach to life and its affairs seems to be the dominant note of all Austen’s novel. She presents her heroines in a somber manner regarding money matters. They are careful enough not to waste money on trifling. In comparison to them we come across certain female characters like the Bingley sisters who “were in the habit of spending more than they ought” (13) and Mrs. Elton in *Emma*, who spends recklessly on her gowns; but soon we are to learn about the flimsiness of their moral fiber. They hide their hollowness by donning external refinements on their persons. Their values are of a superficial world catering to the needs of a superficial life. Though they possess riches they live very discontented lives.

Such are the values of the likes of Bingley sisters in a transitory world. Because of the limitation of their vision of life they fail to understand the bigger and solemn aspects of life. Their morals and ethics are as shallow as their understanding. They are not even ready to become conscious of their lack. They avoid facing who and what they are. This case is seen in Mrs. Elton in *Emma* too. Her sole obsession is wealth, dresses and all sorts of futilities. Boasting about her wealth and connections makes her hearty and vain. Basking in the glory of her ten thousand pounds, she considers all others beneath her. The reader dislikes her as much as

Emma does when she calls her “insufferable woman!” and a “little upstart, vulgar being” (283). Interestingly the environmental ethics¹² of particular persons or class differ and provide them with justifications of their actions so they fail to see the stance of the others and it is this element that creates disturbance in the society when people from different social backgrounds come into contact with each other.

In contrast to them Austen’s heroines are never shown throwing away money recklessly on clothes or such accessories like other girls of that age. They do not need to decorate their bodies with laces and fineries to hide the weakness of their minds. Money is managed prudently for it plays a crucial role in the lives of the people. The reader notes that Austen views a very frugal aspect of household economy in which through Elizabeth she projects a practice of cost-cutting measure. It is in Elizabeth, that we see a practical approach to economy when she marries Mr. Darcy. She avoids prodigality and is frugal in her household affairs. She avoids extravagancy that is a characteristic of her sisters. Even Jane lacks this sense as Mr. Bennet tells her that she is “so generous, that you will always exceed your income” (328). Though Elizabeth is the wife of a rich man, she would not squander, with her husband’s money. Instead of wasting his wealth on her unworthy sister Lydia, who is always short of money, she comes to the rescue of her sister by cutting down “in her own private expanses” (366). This is another aspect of Austen’s different and subtle morality that makes the reader appreciate her art.

The lives of most of the characters (inclusive of men and women), whom Miss Austen depicts, have a kind of obsession with money. A good match is often talked about in terms of money. Mr. Bingley is a cultured man and possesses goodness of heart but his most attractive feature is his five thousand income is an impressive amount in comparison to Mr. Bennet’s meager amount of two thousand though it is enough to make them live decently. Charlotte

Lucas marries Collins because he has “a comfortable home” (120), but for Elizabeth, Charlotte’s idea of marrying Collins is “a most humiliating picture”. She might think that Charlotte’s chances of living “tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen” (120) are few yet it is a decision that is made willfully. Charlotte’s worldly wisdom makes Elizabeth realize later when she is reflecting on Wickham’s mercenary attention to Mary King that “A man in distressed circumstances has not time for all those elegant decorum which other people may observe. If *she* does not object to it, why should we” (145)?

Mrs. Bennet is the one who talks openly on the subject of money as a main source of happiness. People like Wickham and the Bingley sisters nurse the desire of increasing their wealth secretly. Mary King suddenly attracts Wickham’s attentions after she has inherited ten thousand pounds (145), and the Bingley sisters want their brother to marry Miss Darcy for her thirty thousand (191). Mrs. Bennet is obsessed with the idea of wealth. In her youth she had won the love of Mr. Bennet, the owner of an estate, which to a significant extent made her life easy and comfortable. Perhaps that is why she has such a faith in wealth; and perhaps that is why she considers it a main source of happiness. She does not have any idea of what domestic happiness is all about. She is the kind of a person whose happiness revolves around having a good house; a carriage; beautiful dresses; and good furniture.

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are the kind of people who are “forced” to live together. They choose each other due to the personal belongings and material things that they have. Mrs. Bennet “likes” Mr. Bennet for the money that he has; and Mr. Bennet likes her for her “looks”. Each gives what the other wants. Their marriage is more like a business. It may not be inappropriate to say that the two should technically leave each others for other people who have more of what they based their marriage on.

Among the many couples in *P & P* Darcy and Elizabeth is the only one whose notion of happiness is different than that of the rest. These two do not see each other as a mean to an end; they are together not due to the material belonging that one brings into the life of another. We rejoice in their union for it is based on mental affinity and understanding. While the union of people like the Bennets is more likely to break if the material comforts are not available any more, the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth, on the other hand, is more likely to stay. Darcy and Elizabeth have married the persons that they are; the Bennets and others like Bennets have married the things that they possess. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner are from the same camp to which Darcy and Elizabeth belong. They are a happily married couple and respect each other for what they are. Their relationship, understanding and practical knowledge of the world make them an exemplary couple. Jane finds solace and peace in their house when she is in trouble. They treat her with care and kindness. She learns from the Gardiners what is not available to her at home—care and kindness. The happy marriage of the Gardiners gives her an opportunity to think independently and realistically. Her aunt's consoling attitude and discussions—something utterly lacking in the Bennet household—enables her to manage her feelings of loss and strengthen her intellect. Her stay at the Gardiners helps her see things differently. Now she is able to discern “a strong appearance of duplicity” (141) in the Bingley sisters. She would not have done so had she stayed with her mother; so, she learns sagaciously about people and their morals. Here we realize the importance and value of discussion in improving the understanding of the world and morality. Absence of dialogue at the Bennet household not only hampers the understanding of the residents, it creates misunderstanding among them.

Lydia's secret plans result in a problem for the family and Jane's retention eats her up. Mrs. Gardiner also tries to create balance in the Bennet household through her advice, especially

her advice to Elizabeth regarding Wickham is very sincere, practical, and is much appreciated.

“Seriously, I would have you be on your guard. Do not involve yourself, or endeavour to involve him in an affection which the want of fortune would make so very imprudent...you must not let your fancy run away with you. You have sense and we all expect you to use it” (136).

Mrs. Gardiner is a sensible woman and becomes the first to warn Elizabeth from the snare of Wickham. Though it is Elizabeth who announces herself safe from Wickham, yet the reader knows that it is Mrs. Gardiner who makes her think on the subject with a clear perception. Both husband and wife are also the first to detect Darcy’s “partiality for their niece” (242, 43), Elizabeth. Their vision is not hampered by the vices of that society. They live a contented life though they live at Cheapside (not a fashionable locality), yet their wisdom, perception and values are far better than those of the elites. Their peace is only disturbed by the news from Longbourn, and it is with the far-sightedness of Mr. Gardiner that Lydia’s problem is solved. Mr. Gardiner is a man of sense, dignity, grace and poise, and one is led to wonder at his relationship with Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Phillip. Living in one house, and being children of the same parents their understanding and morals are a world apart. Both sisters are vain and stupid—women obsessed by the idea of profitable marriages.

Mrs. Phillip has no issue of her own but her major goal is to make matrimonial alliances for her nieces. For this reason she throws parties and invites young folk especially for the purpose, without any consideration of their eligibility. These sisters sometimes show a lack of sympathy for others as we see Mrs. Bennet rudely accusing Charlotte of enticing Mr. Collins and behaving in an insulting manner toward Mr. Lucas when she hears about the engagement. It is with a lot of effort and due to good education that Mr. Lucas bears her rudeness: the writer

informs us. She lacks self realization for otherwise she would have realized that it was she who was earlier trying to lure Mr. Bingley.

Nothing less than the complaisance of a courtier could have borne without anger such treatment; but Sir William's good breeding carried him through it all; and though he begged leave to be positive as to the truth of his information, he listened to all their impertinence with the most forbearing courtesy (121).

This helps one to realize the fact that with the exception of Mr. Collins all the other male characters are comparatively better in their moral attitude towards other's mistakes than the females. Is it because women were educated in a different manner than men? Why is it so? Why are not the women taught to sharpen their intellect like men? Why do their lives revolve around desires for domestic comforts and for worldly gains? These issues will be dealt in detail in the fourth chapter of this study.

One cannot but appreciate Mr. Gardiner's presence of mind and sincerity when he consoles his agitated sister. As stated earlier, Mr. Gardiner's graces are further revealed in the way he handles the problems and execution of Lydia's affair. He knows the worth of honour and tries his best to save his family from shame; he is ready to spend his hard earned money for the sake of his family honour, while his sister casually comments on the sacrifice made by him.

It is all very right; who should do it but her own uncle? If he had not had a family of his own, I and my children must have had all his money, you know; and it is the first time we have ever had anything from him, except a few presents (287-88).

Mrs. Gardiner, we are told, is "an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman" (132), someone that can be reckoned with some consequential significance. Admired by her elder nieces she plays a significant part in their education through her timely interference in their affairs. Whenever she feels they are suffering from mental crises she, like their guardian angel, steps forward to free them of their troubles. The reader finds her very practical in her approach

towards life. She intelligently guesses how Jane is tormented by her mother's references to Bingley when he deserts her. She has compassion enough to turn the conversation to some other topic when she feels that it hurts her niece. She puts sense into the minds of her nieces about the difference between "violently in love" and flirtation. "But that expression of 'violently in love' is so hackneyed, so doubtful, so indefinite, that it gives me very little idea. It is as often applied to feelings which arise from an half-hour's acquaintance, as to a real, strong attachment" (133). Her worldly wisdom and sincerity helps Elizabeth see things objectively. She later takes her on a tour to Pemberley so as to ease the agony from which she suffers at home. She is a deep and intelligent woman, and is the first to comment about Elizabeth and Darcy saying that "one of them at least knew what it was to love" (244).

Through the characters of the Gardiners, Miss Austen presents a view which is different than the general trends of her society—a society that considers affected manners as an exhibition of good breeding. That is why Mrs. Phillip is awed by the excess of flattery displayed by Mr. Collins. Austen appears to hold that one does not need to possess power and faultless manners to be well-bred. She also disapproves the distinctive economic derision of the society. It is through sound moral education, free from hypocritical pursuits, that one learns to behave selflessly towards others; and this is very obvious in the Gardiners' strong moral obligations towards their relatives. Mr. Gardiner is much of a contrast to his sisters as Elizabeth and Jane are to their younger siblings.¹³

The likes of Miss Bingley possess a superficial idea of morality that is confined to good manners taught to young ladies. She reveals her hollowness and lack of good breeding through her threadbare idea of accomplishments to be merited in women.

A woman 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 (34).

Mr. Darcy, who belongs to the same social setup, seems to agree with her but being more informed adds that “she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading” (36). He has, by then, experienced the wit and intelligence of Elizabeth and is struck by it. Elizabeth’s confidence in her own sound judgment, and her regard for the values in which she believes, creates a conflict within him and challenges his own concepts of right and wrong. She seems to stand for the opposite side of the arguments that he has so far professed. What is right? Why is it right?

He goes through the process of self analyses and closely observes Elizabeth which alarms her. We learn that:

Elizabeth could not help observing, as she turned over some music books that lay on the instrument, how frequently Mr. Darcy’s eyes were fixed on her. She hardly knew how to suppose that she could be an object of admiration to so great a man; and yet that he should look at her because he disliked her, was still more strange. She could only imagine, however, at last, that she drew his notice because there was a something about her more wrong and reprehensible, according to his idea of right, than in any other person present (47).

Darcy, conscious of this attraction, tries to prevaricate it by finding faults in her family and then he tries to suppress his emotions by leaving the place and even removing Bingley from Netherfield. But the desire within him, from which there is no escape, grows so overwhelming and unmanageable that when next he meets her at Rosings he fails to silence it any longer, “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed” (178). The force and beauty of Elizabeth’s depth, subtlety, ethics, and standards make him weak. He learns that she is not one of the many hunting for a husband. His sudden expression of love surprises the reader as much as it does Elizabeth.

Darcy struggles to look into himself keeping aside all his petty prejudices and social ideals that prevent him from declaring his love for Elizabeth. He goes through the process of suffering that is rewarded by self-evaluation.¹⁴ “In the great crises of life, in the supreme moments when to be or not to be is the question, little tricks of suggestion do not help” (Jung 133). He observes Elizabeth’s confrontation with Miss Bingley with interest and notes her confident retorts to all Miss Bingley’s efforts to let her down at Pemberley. She retains her graces increasing Miss Bingley’s chagrin. Miss Bingley’s petty criticism paves way for Darcy to appreciate Elizabeth objectively.

Objective versus subjective morals is yet another issue that runs through the novel *P & P*. There seems to be different views on a wholesome relationship. For Charlotte it is settling down by getting married; for Wickham it is pursuing wealth so as to lead a comfortable life; for Miss Bingley it is to secure a wealthy husband and an affluent sister-in-law; and for Mr. Lucas it is to be near the aristocracy. Love is never a priority, which is why they never talk about it or discuss it.

This does not mean that the whole society is without morals. Here people do censure the mistakes of others. What is wrong with this society is that while people judge others, they remain unconscious of their own weaknesses. Hence Mrs. Bennet may speak ill of the Long family and the Lucas for their schemes in getting husbands for their daughters but fails to realize that she herself is the most active schemer. She, in her efforts becomes almost cruel and purposefully sends Jane on horseback in a threatening weather so that she gets wet in rain. When Jane does fall sick she rejoices, at the expected result, for according to her plans, Jane would be able to settle the affair of marriage well by staying longer with the Bingley family. She is not conscious of the embarrassment she may cause her daughter of appearing wet and getting sick.

Mrs. Bennet is not capable of appreciating the graces of her elder daughters which mortifies Elizabeth at times. Her main concern is their marriage no matter what the cost. In this effort she at times even speaks cruelly, “I am sure Jane will die of a broken heart; and then he will be sorry for what he has done” (214) for she fears the future.

In *P & P*, we observe this fear in all men and women and hence we tend to overlook their weaknesses by being sympathetic. We understand that at certain crucial moments in life one becomes a little expedient when one faces limited choices. Morals at times have to be silenced before the demands of the society no matter how unreasonable they may be. Charlotte’s choice of matrimony is limited but she is intelligent enough to see it, while Elizabeth is beautiful enough to attract the attention of Mr. Wickham, Mr. Collins and finally Mr. Darcy. She has the luck to make her choice as compared to the limited options of Charlotte. In real life most of the common people become slaves to the norms of the society for mere survival. Jane Austen’s practicality in these matters is appreciated by critics. “She is concerned with the difficulty, in real life, of clearly understanding both ourselves and the others, of figuring out the right thing to do, and trying to do it in the face of our desires and life’s conflict” (Benditt 246).

“Judging properly” (89), as we observe in the novel, is not only the outcome of intellect or emotions; rather it is interplay of both—emotions and reason. Human emotions are instinctive and hence spontaneous. They can only be channelized properly through the reasoning faculty. The instinctive reactions are liable to many errors so one cannot afford to consider their moral value on the spur of the moment whether they are good or bad, appropriate or otherwise. We observe that Elizabeth’s dislike for Darcy is formed in a hurry. Furthermore, it is for this reason that one tends to regard Lydia’s behaviour with less extremity than that of Maria Bertram in *M P*. Proper moral and spiritual education guides us in making better decisions.

We notice a spiritual and moral vacuum in the lives of the characters who do not take life seriously. Such people live and approach life superficially and physically. The problems and sufferings in their lives have deeper causes which are a little too difficult and deep for them to understand. The result is that their life and their sufferings both become worse. Wickham and Lydia are only concerned with temporary pleasures. They know what is 'good' for them financially though the moral implications are completely ignored; they do not consider their actions to be 'right' or 'wrong'.¹⁵ What is good and what is right are mere words and if someone tries to define it he or she will be using just other words. Like Austen G. E. Moore does not believe in giving final judgment regarding the principals of ethics. He thinks that it all depends on that which we decide unanimously to call good whether it is a sense of duty or a certain moral conduct. While in the world of P & P the concept of 'good' has its own peculiar interpretation. For those, who need wealth to live a comfortable life, it means worldly comforts and hence "a single man in possession of a good fortune" (1), or a lady with "thirty thousand" (191), become the ultimate goal. Even the rich suffer from the same problem; they differ only in the amount each party has in mind.

In the world of P & P every other family, no matter how well off, looks up to another due to its income and wealth. Their greed grows with the increase of their own fortune. People like them resort to use iniquitous means to gain their end. Miss Bingley criticizes Elizabeth and disapproves of "young ladies who seek to recommend themselves to the other sex, by undervaluing their own; and with many men, I dare say, it succeeds. But, in my opinion, it is a paltry device, a very mean art" (16). But she herself does what she disapproves of when she tries to demean Elizabeth in Darcy's estimation. Her hypocrisy is obvious as she stoops low when failing to find fault in Elizabeth's person she starts criticizing her relatives. This points to a very

serious human weakness: jealousy, and can be generally observed universally, leading to moral degradation. The question is, are we really capable of loving the others as we love ourselves? The answer is not easy for those who want to be truthful, because for a layman his first duty is to himself. Self-love and the love of the other contains a “peculiar kind of contrariety” because “when you are recommending one of these, you are supposed to be speaking against the other; and from hence arises a secret prejudice against and frequently open scorn of all talk of public spirit and real goodwill to our fellow creatures” (Butler.159).

The pursuit of our public and private good comes into an embarrassing conflict when our selfishness blinds us and “our moral judgment is often clouded or influenced by our desires” (Benditt. 245). The only way out is to be morally and ethically sound individuals. We are likely to make mistakes no matter how hard we try to not do that. And even though we make mistakes, we ought to hope and ought to try to become better. There are no ideal characters in P & P; nor does Austen consider herself capable of portraying the character of “the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. Such a man’s conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing; or at least be occasionally abundant in quotation... and illusions”¹⁶. Mr. Stanier Clarke, domestic chaplain to the Prince of Wales, wanted her to write about the character of an ideal clergyman devoid of any sinfulness, but she politely refused giving the above quoted reason.

Austen’s characters are real and realistic; they are the kind of people whom we meet in the street. She enjoys their peculiarities, and laughs with them. She sees them engrossed in their pursuits with so much intensity that it leaves them little time for the consideration of others, as we can see in the case of Mrs. Bennet who lets her daughter ride on horseback in a threatening weather in pursuit of a would-be husband. Darcy dislikes the people of Hertfordshire precisely

due to this reason. The unbridled desires of these people have blinded them to the imminent threat to the well-being of others. Jane falls seriously ill mainly because of something like this. Mrs. Bingley does not mind exposing her daughter to the severity of weather so long as there is some hope that she might get the desired would-be husband. These are the kind of people who have “total want of propriety” (187), as Darcy says. Darcy comes across as a snob in his meeting with these people. His snobbery, however, is more of a shield to protect himself from the stupidities of these people. He disdains Elizabeth’s younger sisters running after the red-coats; and is embarrassed at his own aunt’s behaviour when she slights Elizabeth. He “looked a little ashamed of his aunt’s ill breeding” (164). Later we see him treat the Gardiners with due respect, whom he had earlier resented. He admires their grace and good manners when they visit his house at Pemberley.

Those who are well-bred seldom trespass over the rights of others and respect the privacy of others. To achieve this degree of excellence one has to fight a strong battle against one’s own petty desires with the strength of sound morals. The reader notices this when Darcy’s attitude changes towards others, especially when he actively participates in Lydia’s marriage. According to Brannmark,

what characterizes decent persons is not just that they do not reach the darkest pits of badness but also that they are at least largely free of what might be called “petty vices” like hypocrisy and envy; and since decent persons are located on a moral continuum, where some of them are “merely” decent and others really are virtuous, it also seems reasonable to think that even the merely decent are still characterized by the seeds of virtue, such as a basic level of responsiveness to the plight of one’s fellow human beings (595-96).

Good breeding¹⁷ speaks for itself and this we also see in the behaviour of Emma Watson, an interesting character of Miss Austen’s unfinished novel, *The Watsons*. The contrast between good and bad breeding is very much apparent in this novel. Emma presents a contrast to her

siblings. Their puny pursuits and concerns shock her. She sees them hurting each other to secure transitory happiness for themselves. Emma fails to understand their desperate motives, because she has been educated by her aunt in a different environment. Emma's knowledge of her own self and her confidence equals that of Elizabeth Bennet: both are undaunted by the presence of the wealthy. Their composure and force of character jolts even the proud; rich Darcy and Osborne accept them on their terms, i.e., love.

Emma Watson's concept of love in *The Watsons* is well beyond the limited horizon of her siblings for they lack this feeling among themselves. They are governed by the expediency of their petty desires alone and that is how they believe the rest of the world is too. Both Emma and Elizabeth are capable of intense love with a sense of sacrifice for those they truly love. Their good breeding combined with refinement adds a significant value to their characters. They learn to believe in noble love as a source of strength and inspiration. They are not the kind of people who believe relations are based on material things. Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*, or even the serious and sad Miss Fanny Price in *M. P. Value* love for the sake of love. The object of their desire is an honorable, loving, and loyal man who respects them for what they are; not for what they bring or possess. As they court and are courted, they and their counterparts learn to appreciate inner beauty.

One might well fall in love for the sole reason that the beloved is beautiful but after several years find that beauty is among the lesser charms of the beloved. (Or, more complex, that the very conception of what is beautiful about the beloved has radically changed) (Solomon 5).

Wealth, beauty or social status of the desired companion is of secondary importance for all Austen's heroines. Except for Darcy and Knightly, the rest would not count as rich or wealthy as these two. Edmund Bertram, Henry Tilney, Edward Ferrars are clergymen and even

Captain Wentworth does not belong to the upper class. The female protagonists face temptations of worldly wealth or comparative comforts in the form of marriage but they adhere to their own ideals regarding domestic felicity. Elizabeth Bennet refuses Mr. Collins; Anne Elliot discourages Mr. Elliot; and Fanny Price refuses to marry Crawford for the sake of wealth alone. Preferring domestic felicity over material things and comfort helps us understand Austen's concept of good breeding. Better homes and stronger families are possible only when love is the driving force behind the relations that exist and that are built there. Marriages are happy and successful when partners respect each other for what the other is; not for what the other brings or possesses.

Thomas Hibbs believes that, "In the world of Jane Austen, ethics is largely about making judgments, about distinguishing between virtue and vice, between love and lust, between nobility and self-serving pride, between character and mere wealth or family lineage."¹⁸ Austen most certainly deals with these issues in her novels. However, there is not any certain or final explanation about why some people are more or less virtuous/vicious than others. These basic human emotions are common to all; some are conscious of them or life and the experiences in life make them conscious of these emotions. Others seem to not learn at all from what they go through. Like the proverbial traveler, they have seen the world without learning anything from what they have seen and experienced. Darcy and Elizabeth represent intelligent and educated men and women of that age. They learn from the consequences of their actions, and learn lessons from their mistakes. They learn about life by living it with all its negatives and positives. Others want to live it by preaching or listening to sermons about virtue and virtuous life. The former know others by knowing themselves first; the latter know nothing about themselves and hence about others. They seem to believe that they know all that is there to life; and that one can

learn about it and live it successfully and happily if one listens to what is preached from the pulpit. Little do they know that life is too complex a phenomenon to understand by simply reading about it in books. Any and everyone who assumes that he or she knows all that is there to life is likely to mess up things and subsequently suffer. No matter how intelligent one might be, life is too difficult for humans to fathom. Elizabeth suffers precisely due to this very reason. She thinks that she knows all, and life teaches her how little she knows. Ross explains this point more elaborately by saying that “in important matters, the self-conscious heroine completely lacks self-awareness” (467).

Through the portrayal of Mary Bennet and Mr. Collins Austen shows how out of place they look within their circle and how people react towards them. Among the pleasures and excitements of the society they are a dull blot which bores others and the reader. They rarely ever do what they preach to others. And rarely ever do they come up to the standards they set for others. Their sermons and preaching hardly ever go beyond their lips. I would say that most of the times they do not even know what they mean. Lost in the web of words, which are not theirs, they live a life which is rarely ever in their control. Self-righteous and pompous as they are, life passes by them without knowing what it is all about. Lost in their shallow morality, they hardly ever learn from life or their experiences in it.

Mr. Collins degrades himself by flattering people socially higher and better than he, like Darcy and Lady Catherine. The moral pursuits of both Mary and Collins revolve around sermons and criticizing others. They fail to understand that they are the epitome of the vices for which they condemn others. Their self-righteousness has alienated them from the people around them. And that is precisely why they cannot relate to the issues and problems that others face, and as such the problems and issues that they have in their lives. Mary’s own words justify the

fragility and superficiality of her character and beliefs. Her words and sermons do not convince others because they lack conviction; she only gives lip service to them. She talks about vanity and pride but fails to see that both these vices are a quintessential part of her personality¹⁹. It may not be inappropriate to quote her words to elaborate this point. She says:

Pride...is a very common failing, I believe. By all that I have ever *read*, I am convinced that it is very common indeed, that human nature is prone to it, and that there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonymously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to the opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us[my italics] (17) .

She assigns herself a higher moral pedestal from where she utters words, and expects and hopes that people will act on them. Little does she realize that her sermons are ineffective due to the distance she has from them. She has to learn to respect the words and the people whom she wants to guide. Her words will fall on deaf ears so long as she does not come down to them and be part of them. Lost in her narrow moral world, she cannot see beyond herself. There is not anyone right or good. If there is, that is she herself. She condemns vanity without seeing it in her behaviour.²⁰

Mary does not consider the arguments of others for she is decidedly in conflict with the society. Lack of communication with others further hampers her understanding of the people around her. She continues to preach and criticize the behaviour of the others. Once when she is invited by Mr. Bennet to comment on the “forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them”, she is caught unaware. The narrator tells us that “Mary wished to say something very sensible, but knew not how” (5). This shows her shallowness and her lack of knowledge of the world around her. No wonder, the world pays her back in the same coins: it ignores her completely and she is left companionless.

On the other hand, Bingley though amiable and friendly lacks depth of personality, and avoids discussions and complicated issues. He allows Elizabeth to discuss with Darcy an issue which pertains to Bingley's personality, i.e., his exhibition of "humility" (44). He always depends on others for his decision, and seeks their approval or disapproval of whatever he does. No wonder Bingley is amazed to hear Elizabeth defend him from Darcy when the two discuss his "sweetness." This not only shows his lack of self-knowledge, it also points to how he lives on a superficial level. Instead of living life for himself and thus learn from it, he lives it through the experiences of others. This is why he does not have much of a "voice." Overshadowed by the force and power of Darcy's personality he very appropriately points to his main weakness. He says, "If Darcy were not such a great tall fellow, in comparison with myself, I should not pay him half so much deference" (46). He is intellectually too weak to have a discussion with Mr. Darcy; he is happy with complying with his friend's advice.

Those who rely solely on bookish knowledge of religion and morality fail to understand the problems of the world around them. They are stuck in the past and disregard the changes around them. They fail to guide the new generation to adjust with the changing world and times—they refuse to conciliate.²¹ We have to learn to accept people with their follies and foibles. This is perhaps what Austen's moral world is all about.²² And perhaps that is why she disregards the minor weaknesses of people. Even though Mr. Bingley deserts a "Good girl" (330), we do not judge him very harshly. He does not even think about the pain he may cause Jane. However, when he sincerely enquires about Jane at Pemberley, we sympathize with him for his weakness, and forgive him. And he remains dear Mr. Bingley to us. Bingley loves Jane but leaves her without any apparent reason. He feels for her but does not have the courage to stand up for her. It may not be inappropriate to say that like Collins and Mary give lip service to

morality, Bingley gives lip service to love. Both lack conviction in what they say, and both lack the courage to act on what they say and stand up for their beliefs.

The world of *P & P* shows different shades of love, infatuation, and compromise. One thing, however, is clear. That is, sincere love is essential for a durable and successful marriage. It gives moral and ethical strength to the relation that is established between husband and wife. The ethical terms used repeatedly in the novel carry different connotations for different characters. For Lady Catherine, for example, “obligation” and “decency” carry the same meaning; and she is “not used to have her judgment controverted” (155). She would have everyone agree to her notion of love which revolves around obligation and decency. People like Mr. Collins further enhance her sense of superiority by flattering her. As such she develops her own sense of right and wrong about love. This is why she is shocked to hear Elizabeth, who stands up to defy her authority by stating her own moral reasons for doing so. And Lady Catherine calls her “Obstinate, headstrong girl” (336), but that is how the Lady perceives her even though Elizabeth is right. In the same way Miss Bingley, with her preconceived notions of decorum, fails to appreciate Elizabeth’s freedom of spirit. Elizabeth’s concept of a gentleman shocks Mr. Darcy too, who looks at her with “mingled incredulity and mortification” (182). Darcy considers himself as the epitome of the idea of a true gentleman according to the standards of that time.

Most of Austen’s characters hide their love and feeling, which is yet another shade of love in the interesting moral world of *P & P*. Some of them are hypocrites and secretly maneuver others, which is truer about her female characters. They tend to hide their true feelings and willingly suppress their desires for fear of impropriety. Elizabeth is surprised to find that she had been in love with Darcy. Jane Bennet tries to convince Elizabeth, her only confidante that

her feelings for Mr. Bingley are of a very superficial nature. The reader wonders why she abstains from disclosing her true feelings to the only sister who will keep her secret. Perhaps Jane beguiles herself all the time trying to convince herself of her own fascination for Bingley. She is more conscious of the society and is afraid of being “*looked at*” not “that I am afraid of *myself*, but I dread other people’s remarks” (313). Even Elizabeth blushes quite a lot many times to hide her mortification or when she fears of her secret to be made public. She takes care not to let Darcy know that he is the object of her observation too. Darcy is surprised by her behaviour and it intrigues him all the more. She defends her sister vehemently before Charlotte and later Mr. Darcy when they accuse Jane of not showing any real interest in Bingley. Her intense love for her family even blinds her at times of their weaknesses and she would retort to all who objected to their behaviour.

For the likes of Collins and Charlotte love is more a matter of compromise in which both parties agree to keep their part of the bargain and continue to live as husband and wife. In a relationship between such people, the “attraction” is mainly due to what the other has and what the other earns. There are tailored roles that both have to play which, most of the times, revolve around indifference to each other. In such relationships, the persons involved have nothing to complain about because the contract has been made with a lot of deliberation. On the other hand, the relationship of people like Lydia and Wickham starts with apparent “passion” which in fact is infatuation. The bond is based more on the physical attraction that each has for the other. There is not much of a thought or calculation behind forming this kind of a relationship which is why the “fire” of “passion” is likely to die soon. Theirs is a physical relationship devoid of any respect or care for the other and which is why Wickham’s “affection for [Lydia] soon sunk into indifference; hers lasted a little longer” (366) with every sign of a substantial decrease.

Can the action of Charlotte Lucas of marrying for money and economic security be pronounced immoral? Is there anything wrong with making sure that the material comfort and economic means are sufficiently available through the life that a person chooses to have with another? Is her utilitarian approach wrong? Does one false step, according to other's judgment, though deliberately taken, label a person as immoral? She marries Collins with full knowledge of his character. Charlotte's decision to get married to Collins does not in any way harm another person. She does the "right" thing in marrying Mr. Collins. She does not harm anyone through her decision; the decision rather provides the lonely Mr. Collins with a family he never knew before. Besides, she rids herself of the fear that she has of "dying an old maid" (117). Like others she too "hath a general desire of [her] happiness."²³ Charlotte's decision to get married to Mr. Collins may appear wrong on a certain level. The same decision, however, appears rather benevolent and good from another perspective. That means the "goodness" or "badness" of actions depends on how far it impacts or does not impact others; and how far it ensures happiness and satisfaction to the people involved in the execution of that action. Judging actions from the point of view of morality, though apparently easy, is in fact a complicated thing. Right and wrong or good and bad are relative phenomena; the value that we attach with human actions change with change in perspective and the consequences that the actions have. The Lydias, Charlottes, Janes, and Elizabeths are right in their own right way. We have to learn to accept them as different faces of life—something which is apparently very simple.

Austen's moral world, however, is not so simple to understand. "Propriety," "good manners," or "integrity" are not necessarily the result of good breeding. A couple may have children with totally different kind of dispositions. Jane and Elizabeth are different than their younger sisters; Mr. Gardiner is different than Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Phillip; and the Bingley

sisters are different than their brother. One is often led to wonder who to blame for this lack of propriety and integrity so important in a character. It is difficult to figure out why some children turn out to be different than the others even though they are bred and raised in the same environment. How far is the love or the lack of it between parents responsible for how the children will be when they grow up? How far is the environment around them or their internal mechanism responsible for how they grow up? Does the relationship between/among siblings impact their personality? How much is the personality of an individual responsible for how a person grows up? These are questions too difficult to answer. But what is good is that knowing about these factors makes us conscious to the education and upbringing of our children, families, and homes. Why Elizabeth alone “blushes” at the imbecility of her family is a little too difficult to say. But that is precisely what makes her more desirable, and a better candidate for having a better home and a stronger relation. She judges things and people not just on their face value as most of the other characters in *P & P* do. It is difficult to have some notions or measured steps for ensuring a loving family. These are moral issues which are a little too subtle and complicated. Perhaps this is what *P & P* conveys to the reader that “Precepts are inadequate in [this] matter. People are all too frequently in the moral muddle, a state either of blindness or of confusion” (Benditt.246).

Notes

¹ All subsequent references to the novel *Pride and Prejudice* will henceforth be referred to as P & P for the sake of brevity and the text will be referred to by page number from Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: David Campbell Ltd. 1991).

² Miss Austen's own involvement in the issue makes her use the phrase 'threadbare morality' as she describes Mary's obsession of quoting moral extracts with no reason and so without any effect.

³ Comparing the reaction of Elizabeth to Wickham's villainy and Collins verdict upon Lydia, one is able to compare and contrast two views of life. Elizabeth's approach is that of human being who still hopes betterment while Collins announcement of extreme punishment makes him cruel and judgmental.

⁴ The last stanza of the poem *Crypt* questions the threadbare idea of beliefs among people who possess old bookish knowledge of religion refusing to understand the requirements of the new world.

What

did men worship

in prehistoric time?

Burnt-out stars,

tangled undergrowth,

ruminations of water.

The poem is written by Daud Kamal a Pakistani poet much appreciated abroad.

⁵ The term was used by Susan Wolf in her article *Moral Saints* in The Journal of Philosophy > Vol. 79, No. 8 (Aug., 1982), pp. 419-439 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-4-2-08>

⁶ Jung believes that giving the duty of education to those who themselves are ignorant can be very harmful. In his work *The Development of Personality* he states that "No one can train the personality unless he has it himself" (Jung 171).

⁷ Austen refrains from severely criticizing the weaknesses of her characters. It is through the use of irony that she makes the reader discern the nature of her real intent. Collins with all his faults remains a human being with pluses and minuses. This speaks of her mastery and excellence for she manages to retain decency.

⁸ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* David Campbell Ltd. London. 1992. The references to the novel *Mansfield Park* will henceforth be referred to as M P for the sake of brevity.

⁹ Walton A Litz, *Jane Austen: A Study of her Artistic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1965) p.9.

¹⁰ Earlier, and during Austen's times, "goodness" was associated with religion and hence clergymen were expected to be icons of virtues. Religion played a vital role in the social matters too. Austen's portrayal of the clergymen show a certain degree of vanity and hypocrisy also they were supposed to be models for people's guidance. In those times the clergy was regarded as a respectable profession. Many of her male protagonists are church functionaries. The constant references to them show how she wanted them to behave, if they reflect human weaknesses it is because they are humans and not angels. Making them life like she presents them erring in their judgments, liable to temptations and led to suffer. Her clergymen are part and parcel of the social circle. She wants to point out that though they are placed in a reverential niche yet they are after all humans. She, obliquely and implicitly, criticizes them in the context of social criticism. Restricting her subject to a particular class she manages to avoid the stark complexities and issues of the larger society.

¹¹ There has been an age long struggle between state and religion for supremacy over each other till finally it resolved in England. See *The History of the Church of England: to the Restoration of the Church and Monarchy in 1668* Vol. 1, J. B .S. Carwithen, B. D. Books .google.com.pk (2-6-11)

¹² For detail see *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* by Hargrove. Eugene C. USA: Environmental Ethics Books (Denton T X) 1989. LC No. 1996.

¹³ In Austen's novel Emma we meet two characters who are a striking contrast to each other when it comes to personality analyses. Mrs. Elton owns ten thousand pounds and makes sure that all around her are acquainted with the fact that she possesses more than them and that she has relatives who belong to the elite class. We see her behaving in a condescending manner towards Jane Fairfax who is a penniless orphan but has had the privilege of getting good education in a rich household where she stayed as a companion to their daughter. Jane acts with grace and dignity which is revealed in her manner of speech and actions.

¹⁴ Darcy turns out to be better than Shakespeare's Hamlet who is caught in the question of "To be or not to be" and hence suffering a tragic end, Darcy survives his fate by resolving his dilemma.

¹⁵ Philosophers have tried to define 'good' but could not do so with any finality, e.g. when G. E. Moore tried to define 'good' could not do so and he ended up in saying, "good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' My answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it" (Moore 6).

¹⁶ This extract is taken from a letter to Mr. Stanier Clarke, domestic chaplain to the Prince of Wales, December 11, 1815; Letter 120, p. 443.

¹⁷ It must be remembered that for Miss Austen good breeding means not only good education but a careful rearing where parents take conscious interest in the moral and intellectual development of their children.

¹⁸ Thomas Hibbs. He is such a character "Harry potter, Elizabeth Bennet and Moral Education," *National Review Magazine*. www.nationalreview.com/hibbs/hibbs20051280820.asp.

¹⁹ Dooley discusses how even Elizabeth shows signs of vanity by being proud of her abilities which later she learns were wrong and ill founded judgments regarding Darcy, Wickham and herself. Dooley. D. J. *Pride, Prejudice and Vanity in Elizabeth Bennet* Nineteenth-Century

Fiction > Vol. 20, No. 2 (Sep., 1965), pp. 185-188 .Stable URL:
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0029>

²⁰ She fails to detect that she herself is the victim of vanity. Miss Austen's disapproval of this sin is obvious in her *Prayer (I)* where she begs God to, "save us from deceiving ourselves by pride or vanity" (Austen.498). Austen. *Jane Sanditon and Other Stories (Prayer I)*. (London: David Campbell Ltd. 1996).

²¹ This is a problem facing every society. We fail to understand that we need to adjust and readjust our moral values and principles to be able to stay abreast with the needs and requirements of the changing times—something that leads to what is popularly called "generation gap."

²² Kieran believes that "the point is a challenging one" (132).

²³ From the same book as quoted above.

Chapter Three

The Unregulated Regulations of Society

The insipidity, and yet the noise; the nothingness, and yet the self-importance of all these people!¹

The more I see the world the more am I dissatisfied with it; and everyday confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense(128).

Does it appear in *P & P* that Jane Austen is satisfied with the values, norms, and principles of her society? What is her reaction to the social issues of her time? Does she want to change or reform some of the practices? If yes, how to bring about the change? Do we concentrate on the inner process of the mind of an individual to bring about an ideological change in the society? What does she mean by portraying the picture of such an indeterminate society? These are some of the main questions that face a Jane Austen reader; and they are not simple and easy to answer.

This chapter is an attempt to answer these questions with reference to what happens in *P & P*; and that, different characters and the problems facing them in their life are a comment on the complexities in life. No matter which layer or group of society they belong to, their problems are essentially the same. The way they interact with one another within their own respective social group or layer or with members of a higher or lower group depends on how society rates these different social groups. The desires, hopes, fears, and social psyche of a society are reflected in the socially acceptable or unacceptable principles and practices of a society, and in how members of the society perceive these principles and practices. The confusion between the socially acceptable and individually desirable exists in all societies. Sometimes it comes into conflict with each other in the form of social issues that can be

peacefully resolved only through tolerance and understanding. For this, one has to evaluate oneself and learn about the deeper realities of life by interacting with others and developing a sympathetic understanding of how the others approach life. Darcy's interaction with the Bennets, especially Elizabeth, starts the process of self-realization which subsequently leads to broader understanding of life from the point of view of others. The interaction occurs at different levels and subsequently the improvement.² Those who achieve an insight become closer to others socially, intellectually, emotionally, and they better prepare themselves for a change. For example, Darcy does not change radically. In the words of Elizabeth "he is very much what he ever was" (220). But he certainly has learnt to accept people as they are and respect them for what they are even though he may not agree with them. He has come to terms with the social norm of his society of not straightaway dismissing people if he does not agree with them. If at all he has to show his disapproval, he does that in their absence. This is why later "If he did shrug his shoulders, it was not till Sir William was out of sight" (363).

The society we meet in *P & P* is divided into classes but their boundaries are not clearly defined. In fact they are blurred and seem to merge with each other without distinction. The focus is apparently on the individuals as an integral part of the society to which they belong. Darcy, Lady Catherine, and Bingley are not financial equals. Bingley earns half the amount of Darcy's yearly income and he is not even from the landed gentry but they still share social equality. Mr. Bennet, who is from the landed gentry, on the other hand, is unworthy of becoming a relative through marriage due to the "connections" that he has. What exactly makes one worthy and another unworthy of a relationship is not very clear here. Mr. Bennet is from the same class from which Darcy, Bingley, and Lady Catherine are, but he and his family are not good enough on some standards which are difficult to identify.

Mr. Darcy is the owner of Pemberley, “a kind of model” (34) estate. It is envied by the Bingleys because it belongs to an old family of aristocrats. Darcy represents the immaculate primness of the place to which he belongs. The reader is led to understand that comparing Pemberley to Meryton is like comparing “noble mien” (8, 9), to “playful disposition” (9). The ideas of self-importance and high social status, with which the new comers enter the lively, noisy, and yet harmonious atmosphere of Hertfordshire, come into clash with the residents; belonging to the higher class they have their own preformed notions of social behaviour. They are highly class-conscious as well as money-conscious. Both parties fail to become friendly with each other because they follow different ethos which do not coincide with each other; hence a reserve between them. Bingley turns out to be an exception, because his easy-going personality does not become confused by the complexities that come with consciousness.

Though the Bennets are the wealthiest family of the community at Meryton, with an income of two thousand pounds a year, they are unable to save anything, for the dowry of five daughters. The number of pounds a man earns a year decides his social status.³ The common men and women live in awe of the rich. However, Elizabeth is not daunted by the amount of wealth people possess. Lady Catherine de Bourgh at first, orders Elizabeth to refuse any marriage proposal of Mr. Darcy because he does not belong to their class. With her own preconceived notions of propriety Lady Catherine goes on to threaten Elizabeth by saying that

honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it....if you willfully act against the inclination of all. You will be censured, slighted, and despised, by every one connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never even be mentioned by any of us (336).

To this, Elizabeth the new woman of England, dares stand up and announces the worth of her “self” and sphere. “In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that

sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal" (336).⁴ Here we see Elizabeth at war with the conventions and traditions of her society. She indirectly becomes the spokesperson of the changing times redefining the boundaries of the strict compartments of class distinctions. Unlike Elizabeth Lady Catherine is obsessed with preserving "grades of dignity" (Bulwer 31) which results in a conflict between them.

Both Darcy and Elizabeth are representatives of their social classes, and are proud of their own identity. Darcy appreciates the values of the aristocracy and considers himself justified; he strictly adheres to the traditional norms and values of his class with their belief in propriety and decorum of manners. On the other hand, Elizabeth with her free spirit and democratic ideals considers herself right because she dislikes reserve caused by false and pretentious manners of Darcy's class. One learns to revere all those characters that believe in themselves and uphold moral values of their society. The Gardiners, who believe in common sense and a practical approach to life, combine the qualities of Elizabeth and Darcy. The Gardiners with their abundance of common sense manage to solve the complexities arising from the conflict arisen, due to lack of understanding between the two classes in *P & P*. Being intelligent they understand the stance of both social groups and sympathize with them. They are the first to detect Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth while it is Mrs. Gardiner who sees through the character of Wickham and duly warns Elizabeth of his designs. Even Darcy finally realizes their worth when he tries to understand them, hence they become "on the most intimate terms" (167).⁵

Unlike Darcy and Elizabeth, the Lucas family belongs to the undefined class. They sometimes reveal insensitivity, ignorance, and cowardice, and never come into the limelight. Sir Lucas is satisfied with his claim to knighthood. These harmless individuals enjoy their inconsequential moments of happiness. For them a visit to Rosings Park is an event to be

remembered and the details carefully preserved. They are cruelly ignored by Mrs. Bennet at Collins engagement yet they don't mind and "listened to all [her] impertinence with the most forbearing courtesy" (121). Such are the innocent commonalities of the society depicted in *P & P*. Charlotte Lucas' marriage to Collins is bliss and celebrated with much satisfaction. The father is "convinced of his daughter's being most comfortably settled and of her possessing such a husband and such a neighbour as were not often met with" (158). Characters like these provide a contrast to the likes of Darcy and Elizabeth, who think and believe in more than superficial appearances. Lady Catherine, we observe, totally disregards Maria Lucas whose conversation serves to accentuate Elizabeth's intellect and hence Elizabeth draws Lady Catherine's attention. In Elizabeth, Lady Catherine finds a potential conversationalist because "Elizabeth was ready to speak whenever there was an opening" while social inhibitions are so dominating in Maria Lucas that she "thought speaking out of the question" (154).

The likes of Lady Catherine and Darcy too in the beginning want to preserve their status struggle to retain the social qua, tradition, social norms and requirements. This is why Darcy tries to convince and persuade Mr. Bingley not to marry a girl who is different from his social status. On the other hand, Darcy struggles hard to come to terms with himself before he finally decides to propose to Elizabeth though he is conscious of her low connections. He dislikes the behaviour of her family and states in his letter of explanation:

The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father.—Pardon me—it pains me to offend you (187).

To his disappointment, he falls in love with Elizabeth, and to fulfill his desire to marry her he has to become associated with the "low connection" (32), from which he tries to save his

friend.⁶ The beginning of his first confession of love is loaded with the effort with which he tries to stop himself from falling in love with Elizabeth. The reason is that he finds it difficult to come to terms with the behaviour and ethics of Elizabeth's family. The proposal is sudden and Darcy, mindful of his status, does not behave like a traditional lover. The effort with which he breaks all barriers of social restrictions destroys the peace of his mind creating chaos within him. "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (178).

Darcy's verbal expressions reveal that he wants to retain the status of his class as well as preserve his dignity. His confession of love carries the social supremacy of aristocracy of which he is painfully conscious. The reason is Elizabeth's social standing and the lack of propriety in the behaviour of her family. Austen's universal tone is very obvious here; even today rich men want to marry pretty girls for their looks but if they fall short of their own social status they discredit their families. Elizabeth's reaction equals Darcy's self-revelatory expressions. She retorts with equal force without losing propriety for she is fully conscious of "the compliment of such a man's affection" (179), yet, she will not let down her family. Darcy is a product of his age⁷ and hence he suffers from preconceived notions of his society; he wants to retain his exclusivity. McMaster points out that "Class difference was of course a fact of life for Austen, and an acute observation of the fine distinctions between one social level and another was necessary part of her business as a writer of realistic fiction"(115). With class consciousness comes consciousnesses of power because of the wealth possessed by those who are socially superior.⁸

Darcy being class-conscious carries different personae in Hertfordshire, which complies with the norms of his society and hence appears proud among his social inferiors, yet he is

socially acceptable. Charlotte endorses his claim that a fine “young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself”. And that Mr. Darcy has a “*right* to be proud” (16). The truth is that when such social compulsions are self- imposed one has to carry a dual character which causes complexities. We at times pity him for he is a slave to his traditions. He lives in fear of Elizabeth’s dynamic personality. Darcy reveals his real feelings at Pemberley when Elizabeth visits his house with her “low connections”; Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and this surprises Elizabeth, who fails to comprehend the reason for this change of behaviour. She does not know that he has achieved a certain degree of self-realization.

Lady Catherine never comes to intimate terms with the Collins, rather her invitations to Mr. Collins and his ‘connections’ are more a show of condescension than social interaction based on equality. She makes sure that Collins realizes this, which is why he never trespasses the limits of intimacy for she fears loss of respect which she endeavours to preserve. Later Lady Catherine tries to intimidate Elizabeth by applying the same tactics when she visits her at Longbourn. However, Elizabeth cannot be cornered for she has no social inhibitions. Elizabeth’s answers regarding the enquiries made about her family shock Lady Catherine who is in the habit of “delivering her opinion on every subject in so decisive a manner, as proved that she was not used to have her judgment controverted” (154-155). Elizabeth’s arguments with the Lady at Rosings, though a simple discussion on common affairs, turn out to be a verbal conflict between conservative opinions and liberal ideals as well as consciousness of class distinction. Elizabeth seems to be bent upon proving her own identity as a person than a mere representative of her class. For Elizabeth no class boundaries exist and that is why she remains confident and relaxed while the others around her appear subdued and quiet. The aristocrats, on the other hand,

as in the case of Lady Catherine de Bourgh want to keep a distance between themselves and all those who are their social inferiors.

The same class consciousness we see in *The Watsons*. Lord Osborne, an aristocrat, wants Tom Musgrove to dance with the beautiful Emma Watson, a social inferior. He is attracted by her but wants to preserve his superiority and does not approach her directly. He desires his friend to make sure that if “she does not want much talking to, you may introduce me by and by” (98). His obsession to preserve his status makes him behave ridiculously. This consciousness in them is further intensified by the likes of Tom Musgrove who feed their vanity through flattery.⁹ Like Elizabeth, Emma overhears by chance; she refuses to be overpowered by his wealth and snobbish self-importance. She sensibly guesses that he is “vain, very conceited, absurdly anxious for distinction, and absolutely contemptible in some of the measure he takes for becoming so” (108). Hence she refuses to dance with the gentleman. The ridiculous behaviour of Lord Osborne reminds one strongly of Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *P & P* and Sir Elliot in *Persuasion*.

Through the above mentioned characters we move among the circle of the so called civilized who are obsessed with the idea of following certain norms and sometimes they behave in a pretentious manner. Those who retain graces of manners and speech even during extreme emotional turmoil become more effective. We see how Elizabeth controls her anger at times though it borders disgust, e.g., with Bingley sisters, Lady Catherine and even Darcy. Her “had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner” (182) cuts deep into Darcy and he goes so far in his explanation as to reveal a family secret. The “I” of Darcy and the “you” of Elizabeth make a contract the moment this process of synthesis begins. However those who insist on preserving their traditional views regarding social status never achieve this degree of contentment.

We note that even among the so-called social superiors the views; regarding social status and behaviour, differ a great deal, and are not clearly defined. For Miss Bingley with “such a father and mother, and such low connections” Jane and her sisters have no chance of marrying well but for Bingley “If they had uncles enough to fill all Cheapside ... it would not make them one jot less agreeable”. It is the worldly Darcy who pronounces that it will “lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world” (32, 33). To this, Bingley remains silent for he seems to be confused and this reflects the uncertainty of the members of that society and the class to which they belong.

Individuals belonging to the higher class further exhibit the quality of being secretive in the expression of their private feelings; this makes them hypocritical towards others as well as themselves. Darcy hides his feelings from Elizabeth for a long time yet the reader does not find Darcy despicable even though he refuses to dance with Elizabeth because he gives his reasons. However, in *The Watsons* one immediately falls into a dislike for Lord Osborne, for he behaves ridiculously in his effort to hide his fascination for Emma Watson. Darcy’s open dislike of the vulgarity of Bennet family is based on his preference of good manners, decency, and grace which he exhibits in a greater degree. When extremely angry, he becomes silent. What he needs to learn is that these qualities do not depend on social status alone; hence his views change when he sees the graces of Elizabeth in contrast to the Bingley sisters and his own aunt Lady Catherine de Bourgh at Rosings.¹⁰

Elizabeth and Darcy’s aunt Lady Catherine are the two important females, who represent two different ideologies, mentalities, and mind set, and adhere to their own ideas with determination. They can be seen as representing a collision between class and individual, tradition and innovation, rules and exceptions, and compromises and rigidity. Lady Catherine

may wonder at someone who gives her “opinion very decidedly”(157), and Elizabeth’s apparent disregard to the Lady’s command in a confident manner shows her belief in her own self, when she states that “in marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere”(336). We hear a new woman who is not ready to make any promises to show submission. Lady Catherine has to “recede” and without getting any “assurance” (337) that she required. She needs to be shown a mirror to make her realize that times have changed. Elizabeth decidedly makes clear that she is

resolved to act in that manner, which will, in my opinion, constitute my happiness, without reference to *you*, or to any person so wholly unconnected with me...it would not give me one moment’s concern (338).

Elizabeth has arrived at that stage of self-assurance where class differences do not matter and so when charged with schemes of enticement she readily retorts. She becomes the spokesperson of the new generation who refuses to conform to the old social order. The society has to accept the change and make allowances.

The conservatives or the landed gentry like Lady de Bourgh, Sir Thomas Bertram in *Mansfield Park* and the Darlymples in *Persuasion* are mere representations of the elite. Their vanity is fed by hypocrites who are their social inferiors, yet they desired to be considered their equal. For Anne, in *Persuasion*, the whole exercise is disgusting for she would rather be among humans than mere illusions while Elizabeth feels “vexed” (93). The Elliots never become intimate with those whom they follow, i.e., the Darlymples, whose acquaintance makes them boast of their connections. Their shallowness becomes obvious to the reader for they are satisfied with the mere reference of calling them their relatives. Finally Anne Elliot decides to disregard all class differences and marries Wentworth to the satisfaction of the readers and her relatives because

When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort. This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth; and if such parties succeed, how should a Captain Wentworth and an Anne Elliot, with the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them, fall of bearing down any opposition (245).¹¹

The desire of being connected to people of consequences appears recurrently in Miss Austen's novels and especially among those who are or consider themselves in an unstable financial state. We see this in Misses Bingley and in the persons of Sir Elliot and Elizabeth Elliot in *Persuasion*.

In P & P the characters are constantly on the move and do not seem to fix or limit themselves to their own classes. They mix with each other and learn from each other. The balls at Meryton cater to all types of people and even those who come in hired carriages are equally welcomed. The social discourse is easy and frequent and there is no cruel criticism. The members of the society might have reservations against each other but it never instigates them to behave in an imprudent manner; hence their social interaction is always on cordial terms. Nobody would openly chide Mrs. Bennet for her faulty behaviour towards her two youngest daughters though they are aware of it. It is only through Collins letter that we learn what Charlotte Lucas thought on the subject: "my dear Charlotte informs me, that this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence" (178). The static state of affairs of this locality may have made it morally stagnant, had not an outside element in the form of Darcy or Collins come to chide and criticize them. Even Elizabeth realizes "the mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence" (261) after becoming aware of her family's weaknesses. Both Darcy and Elizabeth try to retain their stance; Elizabeth tries to hide

her feelings at Pemberley, and Darcy with his “silent indignation” (22), acts indifferent to the people of Hertfordshire because both take pride in the class to which they belong.

Miss Austen introduces her characters in a particular social setting; her “coteries”¹² and we recognize and accept them in their environment. The “inhabitants are constantly on the move, entering new coteries” (Hardy.107). In the settled and seemingly regulated¹³ atmosphere of Meryton, the reader encounters an outside element in the form of people from different social groups: Bingley and his family, Mr. Darcy and the officers of the militia. The Meryton society grows with this contact unaware of the repercussion on their future life.

In P & P, the peaceful environment of Longbourn is activated by the news that “Netherfield Park is let at last” and “a young man of large fortune from the north of England”, an eligible bachelor, who came in “a chaise and four” has decided to settle in the neighborhood and the grand house will soon be occupied (1). The key points of interest for the inhabitants of this area are the bachelor, his chaise and large fortune signifying the amount of wealth and status so far unknown to the residents of this locality. They are awed, and greedy for the acquaintance.

The entrance of a foreign element in the form of Bingley family contains personalities whose disposition varies in degrees from each other yet they manage to endure each other’s company because more or less they agree with the prevailing social norms of their society, i.e., the regulated behaviour. We, as readers, are able to discern that though they are friends, their preferences and attitudes differ as we see in the form of reactions they show after meeting the people of this locality.

The general reaction of the new comers is rather negative, bordering on dislike. Mr. Bingley, who is the only good-humoured among them, claims that he “had never met with pleasanter people or prettier girls in his life; everybody had been most kind and attentive to him,

there had been no formality, no stiffness, he had soon felt acquainted with all the people in the room” (14). He seems to reveal signs of unregulated behaviour according to the regulations of the environment in which he has been brought up; for the others turn out to be quite unanimous in their disapproval.

For Darcy “there was little beauty and no fashion” in Meryton and for “none of whom he felt the slightest interest, and from none received either attention or pleasure.” (14) He is paid back in his own coin by the Hertfordshire community who dislikes him as much as he disapproves of them. A barrier in the form of reserve is created between him and the people instinctively which hampers the understanding of each for the other.

The two Bingley sisters “proud and conceited” (12), find the locality not much to their taste, lacking “people of rank” (13), and high social status.¹⁴ Their aspirations, like the residents of the Hertfordshire community, are also based on the desire for higher aspirations in the form of more wealth and a higher status. Married to Mr. Hurst, an indolent man, “of more fashion than fortune” (13), the elder sister seems to be pleased with her life. These three are as cold in temperament as the cold North winds from where they have come, and lack sympathy for the people of Hertfordshire. Nurturing a desire to achieve a high social status, the sisters ardently wish their brother to buy an estate realizing the superiority of landed gentry.¹⁵ Their regulated behaviour lacks a natural ease and carries signs of Victorian hypocrisy.

The other new comers are the officers of a militia regiment: the red coats, like the colour of their uniform become the danger signals foretelling the tragedy that is to fall on these seemingly harmless people. These defenders of the country’s honour ironically turn out to be the cause of bringing dishonour to the respectable Bennet family.

Brighton is the next city mentioned in the novel, where the militia gets posted from Meryton. It is the place where Bennet's reputation is threatened, and, keeping in accordance with her habit of avoiding all that is evil and gross, Miss Austen does not take the reader there, but indirectly relates Lydia's tragedy. The muddle and confusion caused by these outsiders is solved by the people in London, the Gardiners and Mr. Darcy. Thus the novel becomes something of more significance than "[tale]s of courtship and marriage" (Marsh.136). It seems to unfold the aspirations of the society revealing the pettiness behind apparent grandeur.

London is the next city mentioned, where people live in socially defined areas. From traditional, regulated manner of life at Hertfordshire the reader enters a new world i.e. London, where the tragedy of elopement is resolved in a business-like manner. The problem is solved in a professional manner, the financial terms are negotiated and finally the deal is settled. Wickham is paid ten thousand pounds to marry Lydia and save the Bennet reputation from further deterioration; bringing some sort of credit to them in the form of a decent marriage. It changes a social and moral stigma of elopement, into a practical day to day affair.

The irregularities of the society and its problems are regulated through negotiations, understanding, and sacrifice by the members themselves but they are to pay the cost, sometimes in the form of money and at times through personal sacrifices. The characters make blunders and learn to adjust themselves with the changing social order. The people like Gardiners, Phillips and Lucas represent the newly emerging middle class who are able to look after their own advantages through acquisition of money. In their effort to become socially acceptable such individuals even today debate "the respective worth of liberal and conservative values; individuals still struggle to define their place in society, to find personal fulfillment within the bounds of the socially acceptable' (Eagleton 20).

In P & P we come across characters that possess a lot of true potential that lies in them, though living in a pretentious age. What they need is a direction towards understanding and awareness which the religious and educational institutions of society fail to provide. The common man makes blunders before learning how to adjust himself to the new social vision. Society is a dynamic whole and never stays static; with passage of time transformations occur in values and norms. People learn through contact with the others. In the society of P & P, like today, money has to be spent with great consideration especially by the landed gentry because the artisans and traders want to multiply their wealth. The novae riche give a shock to the values of the aristocrats who find their behaviour absurd and consider them “low connections”. The wealth is there but they lack grandeur, confidence, and nobility. They also lack legacy of values; these traits are especially obvious in the behaviour of the Lucas family and Mrs. Elton in *Emma*. The social barriers¹⁶ created by class and money have to be crossed to achieve harmony.

In earlier times, religion decided social supremacy, while in Austen’s society it was money in form of “pounds” that decided a person’s worth. Class distinctions were made on basis of land owned. Because of this new mindset the aristocrats feel embarrassed and the affluent middle debate “liberal and conservative values; individuals still struggle to define their place in society, to find personal fulfillment within the bounds of the socially acceptable” (Eagleton and Pierce. 20). There are some exceptions in people of lower social ranks, that are not financially sound yet well mannered, e.g., Mr. Martin, a farmer in *Emma*, while there are those who display confused morals, ill manners and a confused life style as we see Mrs. Smith in *Persuasion*, and the Price family in *Mansfield Park*. Interestingly, Austen never dwells long on them, and so we learn very little about their relationships with others. Their family life lacks unity and understanding but the main characters of Austen’s novels are people she knew well. Her own

strong family tie with her family, which is the basic unit of every society, reflects the importance she gave to the relationships of her characters. The rest she supplements in directing the story ahead. The Bennet family is constantly in touch with the Phillips' and the Gardiners; the Bingley family is often seen together. Lady Catherine is regularly visited by her nephews and Mr. Lucas visits his daughter while Mr. Collins takes refuge with his in-laws when Lady Catherine's anger becomes unbearable.¹⁷

In *P & P*, we meet with characters who are confused about their place in the society. After acquiring wealth their main concern is to acquire the habits and customs of the aristocrats; yet they are not sure about themselves. Sir Lucas is uncertain in his behaviour towards Darcy as well as Lady Catherine. He behaves in a subdued manner, when invited to have dinner, claiming "I am the less surprised...from that knowledge of what the manners of the great really are, which my situation in life has allowed me to acquire...such instances of elegant breeding are not uncommon" (151). However, we see his behaviour at Rosings ridiculous for he "was so completely awed, by the grandeur surrounding him, that he had but just courage enough to make a very low bow, and take his seat without saying a word" (153).

The behaviour of Mr. Lucas at Rosings makes one wonder because we hear him claiming to be at the court and see him observing courtly manners. Among the Meryton crowd he flaunts knighthood. He shows best of manners and "good breeding" (40) which make people praise him when he is in his own "coterie". Yet, when he is among the aristocrats, the prevailing uncertainty regarding class distinction is apparent in his behaviour.

Jane Bennet's behaviour also reveals a certain kind of reserve keeping in accordance with the norms of society but unlike Darcy her reserve is private and personal. She fails to "show" her "affection" which according to Charlotte is a

disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him; and it will then be but poor consolation to believe the world equally in dark (18).

The same delay is shown in *Emma* where Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill conceal their engagement that results in torment to both parties. They live in fear of being censured by the society. Frank Churchill knows that if his secret engagement is made public he will be disowned and hence lose inheritance.¹⁸

In contrast to the above mentioned characters Elizabeth behaves in a different manner. She professes opinions without any regard to secrecy and this enhances her confidence. Still she must leave Longbourn to see the society in its totality for more improvement. As compared to Elizabeth, Charlotte Lucas knows more about worldly affairs and the requirements of her society because of her circumstances. She is the daughter of a trader, though financially secure lacks the two regular social requirements of a good match: beauty and a good dowry, and that have taught her how to act with prudence and avail opportunity. Elizabeth learns the value of prudence at the end of her tour at Pemberley where she comes in contact with a different society.¹⁹

In Meryton the social life is shared by the inhabitants and there is no reserve. Elizabeth's strong freedom of spirit and Darcy's overwhelming sense of propriety²⁰ must show some sort of relaxations so as to understand each other. Elizabeth also reveals a certain degree of propriety and decorum and knows how to adjust with the others without losing her individuality. Her behaviour never borders on insolence. She does not like the authoritative tone of Lady Catherine and though deeply hurt by Darcy's refusal to dance with her she never retorts in a coarse manner. "Mr. Darcy is all politeness" (23), is all that she has to say, leaving the impact on the listener to judge for himself and Darcy is led to praise her "sense and disposition" (187). Darcy has been

brought up to value certain notions that do not comply with the community at Longbourn and hence he fails to adjust in that environment. Let us compare the two instances of difference of behavior in Darcy's and Elizabeth's society. At Longbourne,

The party in the dining-room was large, for almost all the Lucases came to meet Maria and hear the news: and various were the subjects which occupied them; Lady Lucas was enquiring of Maria across the table, after the welfare and poultry of her eldest daughter; Mrs. Bennet was doubly engaged, on one hand collecting an account of the present fashions from Jane, who sat some way below her, and on the other, retailing them all to the younger Miss Lucases; and Lydia, in a voice rather louder than any other person's, was enumerating the various pleasures of the morning to anybody who would hear her (109).

At Pemberley, when Elizabeth arrives at the great house, she and her relatives are received in a saloon.

In this room they were received by Miss Darcy, who was sitting there with Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley.....Georgiana's reception was very civil, but attended with all that embarrassment...shyness and the fear of doing wrong....a pause, awkward as such pauses always be, succeeded for a few moments....Miss Darcy looked as if she wished for courage enough...; and sometimes did venture a short sentence, when there was least danger of its being heard..... The next variation which their visit afforded was produced by the entrance of the servants with cold meat, cake, and a variety of all the finest fruits in season; but this did not take place till after many a significant look and smile from Mrs. Annesley to Miss Darcy had been given, to remind her of her post. There was now the employment for the whole party; for though they could not all talk they could all eat (249,50).

The sharp contrast of "noise" (24) and openness of Meryton society to the reserve and silence at Pemberley is very apparent here. The intimacy of the Bennets and the Lucases is contrary to the lack of openness at Pemberley where people have to "endeavour to introduce some kind of discourse" (149). The atmosphere at Pemberley becomes suffocating even to the reader and one is as happy as Elizabeth when the visit is ended. Yet one feels a need of improvement in the atmosphere though some will claim "Pemberley for a kind of model" (34) it is the marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy that must do the trick.²¹ Pemberley society needs

“openness” which Elizabeth provides while Meryton needs consciousness which Darcy’s presence supplies. The Meryton society needs a little bit of Pemberley criticism to reform though Pemberley is by no means an ideal society.

In the Meryton society, apparent “easy unaffected manners” (21) win approval and hence Bingley and Wickham are soon everybody’s favourite. Darcy, who is highly admired for his wealth and status, soon loses his popularity when his proud demeanor gives signs of disgust. This also shows how hastily and instinctively the society shows its reaction towards others. Within a period of a few hours the judgment is passed without being discreet. Yet Austen sympathizes with their openness.²².

Such is the sympathy in Meryton society that they readily find fault with Wickham when they learn about the elopement and would talk about Wickham’s loose behaviour and his “irregularity” (275) and unanimously declared their hatred toward him for he has cheated them all through the “appearance of his goodness” (276). But when they hear that he is finally to be married respectably

the good news quickly spread through the house; and with proportionate speed through the neighbourhood. It was borne in the latter with decent philosophy. To be sure it would have been more for the advantage of conversation, had Miss Lydia Bennet come upon the town; or, as the happiest alternative been secluded from the world, in some instant farmhouse.(echoing the novels of sentimentality) But there was much to be talked of, in marrying her; and the good natured wishes for her well-doing, which had proceeded before from all the spiteful ladies in Meryton, lost but little of their spirit in this change of circumstances, because with such an husband, her misery was certain (290).

With the marriage of Lydia, and the more profitable ones of the two eldest daughters, the Bennets’ initial disgrace turns to felicitations though a few weeks earlier they were sanctioned. It is the same old story, for it shows how hasty and fickle we are in our judgments. As the

saying goes all is well that ends well so within the Bennet house the lamentation of *virtue lost* changes into *marriage gained*.

The short memory and abundance of forgiveness make Meryton a ‘merry town’ and it is the proof of Miss Austen’s idea of all prevailing well being where the sorrows and happiness of the inhabitants become a collective concern. Mrs. Bennet soon forgets her resentfulness at Charlotte’s marriage with Collins, and the Lucas are soon as warmly received in the house as earlier without any reference to the ‘entail’.²³ They forget their earlier restraints and become as friendly as ever. The temporary reaction of Mrs. Bennet at Charlotte’s marriage is cruel because her own scheme failed. She does not realize that it would have been a torture for her daughter to be married to Collins while she had time and leisure to attract a person more suitable to her disposition.²⁴ The positive side of Mrs. Bennet’s reaction is that her anger does not persist for long neither does she try to harm Charlotte’s interest.

In P & P solidarity, trust, brotherhood and general sympathy of the Meryton society presents a social cohesion where people are sympathetically related to each other and spirit of relatedness prevails. In comparison to it, Rosings reveals reserve, distance, and condescension. Though Austen restricts herself to a particular class yet the characters, in both these places increase our knowledge of humanity. Elizabeth states in P & P, that she likes to study characters and “intricate characters are the *most* amusing” (39) while Darcy believes that the country does not provide a varying society. He wants to stress that one cannot consider oneself as good observer when there is so little to observe to which she answers as if voicing Miss Austen’s own explanation of her self-imposed limitation, that “people themselves alter so much, that there is something new to be observed in them forever”(39).²⁵

One cannot but admire the ‘general good-will’²⁶ that prevailed in Meryton with all its lack of refinement in some areas and amongst some persons. We see that the community of Hertfordshire is closely connected through visits, news and gossip without any reference to a particular gender. Mr. Bennet is as eager to wait on Mr. Bingley as his wife and Sir William Lucas is the first one to announce his daughter’s engagement with Mr. Collins at Longbourn. Everybody readily promotes the happiness of others and hence we see that when Mr. Lucas observes Mr. Darcy without a partner in a ball introduces Elizabeth with a generous compliment. “Mr. Darcy, you must allow me to present this young lady to you as a very desirable partner. – You cannot refuse to dance, I am sure, when so much beauty is before you” (23). The behaviour of these seemingly harmless people reflects their goodwill and their idea of good manners, propriety and decorum.²⁷

Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*, gives herself the credit of improving Harriet Smith’s manners and so aspires a worthy match for her without realizing that only accomplishments and intimacy with the gentry will not be enough to get her a rich husband. For this reason she promotes Mr. Elton’s acquaintance but when he turns out to be her own suitor she considers him “proud, assuming, conceited; very full of his own claims, and little concerned about the feelings of others” (135). She fails to realize that she herself fits that description while dictating Harriet’s life and causing her to suffer disappointment.

Decorum, propriety, and good manners in ladies though considered as an integral part of accomplishments are not enough in P & P. A superficial knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages as well as lessons in walking and talking are considered important among the elite and became a part of education. Yet there are people like Darcy who want something more substantial. For them improvement of mind through extensive reading is

certainly an asset. Still he also believes that if a woman aspires to marry well she must possess high 'connections' and money otherwise "it must very materially lessen their chance of marrying men of any consideration in the world" (33).

This reveals the worthlessness and artificiality of the notions that the people of Miss Austen's society held regarding female eligibility. Though critics may comment that Miss Austen's female protagonists

exhibit their "accomplishments" be these the traditional achievements of musical training, knowledge of modern languages, and dancing, or the new, moral accomplishments of wit, judgment, and taste, in their choice of language, literature, clothes, objects, and entertainments (Benedict.116).

Yet respect and esteem for the spouse are the priorities of the ladies who marry for personal satisfaction; it does not depend on riches. Elizabeth's belief in her own capabilities is perhaps the cause of Darcy's attraction towards her and vice versa; this is confirmed by Mr. Bennet "I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as your superior" (356). "Esteem", in Johnson's definition, is "reverential regard"; it is, in Gay's words, "virtue's right alone."²⁸ Wiesenfarth, while discussing *Sense and Sensibility*, comments how Willoughby loses his esteem by acting villainously and Colonel Brandon earns it through his "benevolence" (58). In *P & P*, Wickham loses his "esteem" by his frivolous behaviour and Darcy earns it by his "unexampled kindness" (345) towards the Bennet family.

The preferences of behaviour, actions and general sympathy among the members of Hertfordshire are considered vitally important. Austen perhaps "thought that it was community that shaped morals rather than the nations" (Collins. xiii). Good manners she appreciates exceedingly but not when they would become a hindrance in relating the true feelings.²⁹

We become aware through characters like Jane Bennet in *P & P*, Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*, and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* how the existence of the others influences our own judgment and feelings. These forces, in the form of ‘the others’³⁰ start managing our lives because we are too weak to defy them or too conscious to ignore their existence. The observance of good manners is a social requirement that borders on hypocrisy but they have to show a certain degree of “reticence and self-control which seems to belong to their age” (Southam 164).

Darcy’s indignation at the vulgarity of those whose behaviour he disapproves is revealed in his silence and it costs him an effort to speak of it when it becomes a necessity. This concealment at times called hypocrisy, lies hidden behind good manners, when one does not say what one really believes in.³¹ Darcy manages to free himself through a process of self development in the middle of the novel. He has matured enough to speak what he thinks when he comments on “total want of propriety” (187) in Elizabeth’s family, explicitly, in his letter addressed to her. Elizabeth’s strong reaction makes one feel her defiance of the conventions of her society by her total disregard for class division and social distinction that stress on superficial mannerism.

One reason why Mr. Bingley so readily becomes a favourite is his tremendous amount of sympathy and lack of affectation for the society of Meryton. He immediately adapts to their environment and in return they love him for his decision to be “at the next assembly with a large party” and when he declares that he is fond of dancing they unanimously agree it “was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley’s heart were entertained”(6).

Bingley, with his happy-go-lucky personality, easily fits in the scheme of things at Meryton and catching their enthusiasm he announces that “as soon as Nicholas has made white soup enough, I shall send round my cards,” and those who object to it “may go to bed” (51),

referring to Darcy's dislike of the whole scheme. At this Bingley's high regard increases manifold in the eyes of these simple people who consider all a part of themselves. This inclusivity is a sharp contrast to Darcy's exclusivity when he does not try to understand the Meryton assembly and as reported by Mrs. Long, with one of the members of the Meryton assembly "he sat close to her for half an hour without once opening his lips"(16). Good opinion, honour and esteem prove to be social binders and create a certain bond among the individuals. For the Meryton assembly, esteem, is based on love and understanding. They are still respectful towards Darcy but it is born out of their traditional fear of the high and rich.

The people of Meryton dislike Darcy's snobbishness when he refuses to dance. This cruelty is beyond endurance of those who consider dance as "one of the first refinements of polished societies" while Darcy cruelly remarks that "Every savage can dance" (22). Unable to see beauty in them he behaves with a certain degree of self-importance and is soon declared "So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great" (11).

Elizabeth's refusal to his proposal reflects the true spirit of Meryton society. Though, without any claims to an ideal society they are united. Those who want to become a part of them must learn to appreciate their spirit and compromise with their values and morals. When Wickham enters with all his villainy in disguise, he adjusts with the environment without finding any apparent fault with the people and we see him welcomed with open arms. True, the people here are not intelligent enough to see beyond the surface and so are blinded with his apparent qualities and charms, which leads the reader at times doubt their mental abilities and sanity; but on closer study one realizes that it is because they are 'innocent' and accommodative. Their vast sympathy is all inclusive which can become damaging too. They fall an easy prey to the likes of

Wickham. They must learn that blind faith is wrong and that they must open their eyes and minds to the inner realities and be able to see truth. Only then they will they be able to avoid future social problems. They ought to be more prudent in their decisions.

The social setup in *P & P*, not only reflect social differences but also moral diversities and weaknesses. People of this world are so engrossed in their pursuit of what they call 'happiness' that they do not realize the immorality of their conduct. They trespass all social and ethical boundaries of decent behaviour. Their desires are related to objects of different kinds. Wealth is measured in terms of how many thousands a person possess rather than the character hence carriages, gowns and jewels become the ultimate goal. Amid the tumult of worldly desires the author has a huge task of making people realize the meaning, worth and value of true happiness.

In *P & P*, it is not only the social status that creates conflicts but also social perspectives and ideals that need a redefinition and adjustment among the members of the community for a harmonious living. Even the houses³² that are mentioned turn out to be symbols of social standards. They are depicted in such a way that they become "characters" in themselves. Taking great pains over forming the houses according to her characters Austen places them in a particular setting keeping in mind the people who are to occupy them for "She saw environment as a case both forming and formed by people. Her houses are animated, or fail to be animated, by the life led within their walls and beneath their roofs" (Hardy 80).³³

Longbourn is a family seat which has for a longtime borne the Bennets with its hustle and bustle that throbs with desire and the estate has entertainments for those who might lack in their own areas: Mrs. Bennets invitation to Bingley to shoot the birds if he cannot find them at his own estate (317). The house bears all types of weathers well, and though Miss de Bourgh may

find fault in the parlour being full west, it is never an inconvenience for the inhabitants.

Comfortable and hospitable, the house has the capacity to provide seclusion to those who need it and we often see Mr. Bennet in his study. Guests come and go and are always welcomed even if it be people like Mr. Collins.

Netherfield Park is comparatively a big house, that suited the vanity of the Bingley sisters for it provides them physical extension, yet the walking path around it “just admitted three” (49). The pigmy inside them realizes its smallness making them display objects of material value and worth. However, it fails to make the likes of Elizabeth feel comfortable though provided with all the physical comforts available. It is only Bingley’s existence that animates it and though Elizabeth finds herself uneasy it nevertheless provides comfort to its future mistress who recovers much to the delight of the master of the house.

In the near vicinity is situated yet another interesting house that belongs to Sir William Lucas who “left his residence in a small market town” after his presentation at St. James. We are told by the author that it is a “house about a mile from Meryton, denominated from that period Lucas Lodge, where he could think with pleasure of his own [newly acquired] importance”(15). The house is not described but we learn that Charlotte Lucas “perceived” Collins from “an upper window as he walked towards the house,” quickly joined him in the lane and the deed is done. The future heir of Longbourn state has decided to “throw himself at her feet” (116). The house has served its purpose; Collins and Catherine are respectably married and the object has been attained.

We come to know through characters like Jane Bennet, Anne Elliot and Fanny Price how the existence of the others influences our own judgment and feelings. The others start managing our lives because we are too weak to defy them or too conscious to ignore their existence. Mr.

Jones also sees how “Anne Elliot's sometimes painful experience of the presence of others gives the project an ethical dimension” (397). Elizabeth’s democratic spirit helps her create a friendly atmosphere even in Pemberley. The democratic ideals were in the air of the society and an individual’s respect was much stressed. Though Mr. Collins behaves like a servant bent on pleasing his master, in this case Lady Catherine yet the moment the slave is removed she does not excite our respect any more. There has to be a Collins to give Lady Catherine an identity otherwise she will cease to exist as happens in the above mentioned case. When Lady Catherine comes to prevent Elizabeth, from marrying her nephew she finds an individual before her who is not daunted by her authority. Elizabeth refuses to behave like a slave and Lady Catherine ceases to be a master. This we observe when she pathetically trails after the enraged Elizabeth who has no compassion for the woman, because she has come to deprive her of honour and freedom of choice. It is from the very beginning that Elizabeth has decided her opinion of the great lady. The reports that she hears are enough to make her see the pretentious presence of the Lady; that is why she is not afraid of her wealth, rank and social status. Elizabeth’s attitude reveals that a new social order is on its way to reshape ideals.

Capitalism was redrawing the social map of England. The old hierarchies of wealth and power had already given way to new ones during the civil war and had to be renegotiated in 1688. New fortunes were being made in commercial ventures in the East and West Indies. Men without rank or family distinguished themselves in naval skirmishes protecting these ventures on the high seas (Ruth 195).³⁴

In P & P, true relationships are based not on financial basis but on love, understanding, respect, and tolerance. There is a strong relationship between objects and man as well as between one individual and another, in Austen’s novels. Elizabeth unlike other females of her society rejects the obsession of the individual with the physical objects; especially those of

comfort and status. They are potentially threatening and may overshadow other human relationships. Humans are ruled by the desire of objects that in themselves do not provide any satisfaction. When Charlotte marries Collins, she receives all the objects of comfort but moves to the back of the house to avoid the encumbering company of the source that provided it. Whole lives are spent in the pursuit of achievement of things valueless in themselves and so contentment is not felt. For this reason Miss Austen promotes prudence in men and women, making them realize that they should direct their energies towards mental gains in the form of morality and strong ethics for that is where satisfaction lies. Charlotte cannot totally shun the society and hence sees as little of Collins as possible and Elizabeth, observing her, doubts her “degree of contentment”.³⁵ Charlotte manages to survive because she is the part of this pretentious society.

Those who are obsessed with their social status gain no personal satisfaction and lead the lives of perpetual inward turmoil. Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley remain experiencing pain and chagrin for they would not easily compromise with the new romantic idea of marriage of true minds and similar dispositions, which other characters finally realize. Yet, observes a critic that

the lives of these genteel idlers after all were necessarily somewhat vapid, and void of anything heroic in action or feeling as well as of violent passion or tragic crime. Few sets of people, perhaps, ever did less for humanity or exercised less influence on its progress than the denizens of Mansfield Park and Pemberley, Longbourn and Hartfield, in Jane Austen’s day (Southam 190).

In reality the “fine distinctions” between societies seem to be fading but the individuals are not conscious of them. If, by chance, they are to live together, they have to make sacrifices and compromises because as Mr. Gunn points out that in *P & P* as well as in other novels of Austen the “world was divided and confused by contradictory social visions, large-scale political

conflicts, and an ongoing redefinition of the ruling class” (404).³⁶ However, Austen does not discuss the political issues at all, perhaps because they are restricted to a certain age and a particular region. The people³⁷ of Regency England had become aware of lack of moral values in the general public especially those who were losing wealth, property and status and were on the verge of poverty. In panic they acted imprudently and so “In Austen’s novels, there is always a social or economic or moral consequence of foolish or unguarded behaviour” (Giffin 108). The middle class, with the increase in their wealth, are seen prospering; for example, the Lucas family and the Gardiners etc. while the landed gentry are facing financial problems and Mr. Bennet is short of ready money to settle the affair of Lydia. Through these money problems one becomes aware of the power of money and how it helps to solve even moral and social problems.³⁸ Class, money, individual and morality are negotiable and compromises have to be made to achieve surface harmony and serenity.

The authority of the landed gentry is clearly seen to be weakening and challenged in the form of people like Elizabeth as she questions Lady Catherine’s interference in her personal matter. The wealthy lady, with a lot of effort, manages to compromise with the changing values and traditions. It is with a very heavy heart that Miss Bingley or Lady Catherine comes to accept Darcy-Elizabeth relationship. Matters that seem trivial to us in our contemporary world were serious issues and were considered with much apprehension.

Much heart-burning and discontent sometimes arose as to *who* should stand above *whom*, and especially as to who was entitled to the high privilege of calling and leading off the first dance: and no little indignation was felt at the lower end of the room when any of the leading couples retired prematurely from their duties, and did not condescend to dance up and down the whole set. We may rejoice that these causes of irritation no longer exist; and that if such feelings as jealousy, rivalry, and discontent ever touch celestial bosoms in the modern ball-room they must arise from different and more recondite sources (Giffin 36).

However, in *P & P* amid the newly emerging scenario, we observe that the worth of an individual needs to be redefined. Darcy considers Elizabeth, in the beginning, as one of those females who are on the hunt for a husband; hence he treats her with aristocratic indifference. But, when she enters alone at Netherfield Park, her true self is revealed to him; the moment becomes an exceptional moment of revelation in his life with regard to female power. His whole being gets involved in a conflict within him and he wonders why a woman whom he had earlier considered unworthy of notice is able to attract his notice. It is then and there that he sees an individual who is sure of herself; who does not bother about her appearance; who has an active mind; and stands firmly before the fashionable³⁹ Bingley sisters without being intimidated by them. She is indifferent to their verbal bullying.

Though we meet people from different social groups but our ability to relate to them on certain levels and a sense of nostalgia of how perhaps part of us is like them make them more attractive for us even today.⁴⁰ The characters are “irresistibly fascinating as literary creations, and horribly fascinating as persons whose counterparts persist in every generation and through all stages of social change” (Ward 138).

We become aware of the strength of Elizabeth’s character and her courage when she visits Bingley’s house to see her sick sister. Her strong morals and a belief in her own self saves her from being impressed by status and wealth of those around her. Her indifference to social decorum intrigues Darcy, for he has come across a woman who is so conscious of herself that she refuses to cater for the requirements of the others. Appearing with six inches deep in mud she disregards her appearance. Darcy’s preconceived notions are daringly challenged by this woman who is ready to argue with him. The conflict of ideas does not exist among the protagonists only but also among the other characters like the Bingley sisters, lady Catherine etc.

and I think Miss Austen's main concern is to make sure that all conflicts get resolved so as to live harmoniously.

In *P & P* we observe, the characters like Darcy, pass difficult phases of life with dignity and learn to compromise their conventional outlook with that of the newly emerging social scenario. Lady Catherine must come to terms with Elizabeth and learn to respect her individuality if she wants to maintain a harmonious relationship with her relatives. Austen's main concern is to bring to the surface the simmering issues of her society through discursive dialogues and the dealings of the characters with each other. The problems are resolved by juxtaposing the traditional values with new changes to form a give and take regimen.

The reader becomes a critical observer of the social milieu and is amused by the pretensions, hypocrisies and false values of people by sharing their experiences. We observe that Bingley's sister has a double plan of happiness. She wants to marry Darcy and make his sister her future sister-in-law, thus increasing their wealth. Such unrealistic and petty ambitions amuse us for we can see through them and sympathize with them. Through process of self analysis some characters manage to save themselves with dignity after going through a trauma; like the Bennet family.

Individuals in *P & P* are exposed through their peculiar idiosyncrasies and dialogues. Mrs. Bennet's limited understanding is revealed in her obsession with the desire to get her daughters married, Mr. Lucas is forever trying to remind people of his Knighthood and Darcy's reserve is self explanatory. Their attitudes and behaviour change with change in circumstances. They behave differently when they are in their element among their social equals. Mrs. Bennet and Sir Lucas turn mute before Lady Catherine and Darcy is all hospitable and attention when he is at Pemberley, while among the 'others' and at other places they behave differently.

In addition to these there were other social issues in the society that Miss Austen mentions e.g. the moral corruption of the people, desire for wealth, hypocrisy etc. But the importance that she gives to solving class differences and selfishness makes the reader realize that if people would listen to each other as individuals then many problems can be solved. What we need is a common ground. The attitude of the people towards religion has already been discussed in the first and second chapter. In *Emma*, Mr. Woodhouse stays home even on Christmas day rather than attend church because there was a little snow. He finds justifications that suit his personal requirements, like Lady Catherine in *P & P* and Mr. Elliot in *Persuasion* do as they defend their cause.⁴¹ Whether it is religion, morality or class differences, they are all presented in the form of marriage because it forms the basic family unit that expands with the passage of time.

Money and marriage, like today, are yet other most sensitive issues of Austen's society. In *P & P*, it creates problems for the have and the have-not. It brings out the worst in the individuals and the temptation of increasing one's wealth creates social imbalances of the society. The town of Meryton is emotionally vibrant. There is a dearth of 'eligible match' (128) in the form of rich bachelors that are a rare commodity and their market value is high. The young girls are 'out'⁴² before their time in pursuit of this rare breed. The dearth created a vacuum resulting in social distortion. The society of Meryton acts against the regulated traditions by this allowance to young women, which surprises the conventional Lady Catherine de Bourgh who considers it a rebellion against traditional values. To this Elizabeth says "it would be very hard upon younger sisters, that they should not have their share of society and amusement" (157), implying perhaps that they be allowed to get a chance of marrying well, for, to Charlotte Lucas "it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and

however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want” (117). Here we see a new issue surfacing, i.e., allowing equal opportunity to all. This is indeed an unregulated behaviour on its way to become a regulation.

The people of Hertfordshire fail to see these evils around them so even characters like Wickham are exposed when the harm is done. The element of evil in this “forest of Arden”⁴³ has to practically strike for they would not believe reports from the others. Among each other they would readily believe in all harmless gossip, but when Miss Bingley warns Elizabeth of Wickham’s villainy “not to give implicit confidence to all his assertions,” and his reports of Mr. Darcy’s cruelty as “perfectly false”(89); she refuses to trust her; for Miss Bingley has not confirmed to the regulations of Meryton. They are not ready to believe the outsiders who do not show any sympathy for them.

Conformity to the general will resemble the basis of Rousseau’s⁴⁴ social contract that the individual is supposed to make with the community, to become an integral part of the “collective self” (53); only then is one allowed to enjoy the privileges offered by the society. The Bingley sisters refuse to become a member of the Meryton society and hence are considered proud and conceited. Their morals are not trusted and hence their reports or warnings disregarded though they may be made sincerely.

For such persons in Rousseau’s dialectics are the outcasts. But in Miss Austen’s society even they are allowed to stay. They are given an opportunity to rectify their views and if they still remain adamant they better leave the society for the one where they may feel more comfortable. The Bingley family is removed to London but they must be taught a lesson. Once they have entered in Miss Austen’s world, it becomes her business to teach them through their

errors; make them realize the falsity of their notions; and when Miss Bingley fails to improve, she goes through pain and is forgotten.

We as readers tend to view the behaviour of such characters as born out of a kind of faulty educational institutions of their society; revealing through their behaviour that formal education inculcates a sense of superiority in the individuals. They begin to consider the others their intellectual and moral inferiors; for education was associated with morality. Education ought to eradicate misunderstanding, improve morals, and create tolerance. We see that most of the characters who have received education from some institution or the other become ambitious and materialistic so even the clergy is corrupt and hence not trusted to be respected. Mary Crawford, in *Mansfield Park*, disapproves of her brother-in-law, a clergyman who lives to eat and drink. In *Emma* we meet Mr. Elton, the clergyman, who is “proud, assuming, conceited” (135), while in *P & P*, Mr. Collins degrades himself in his attempt to please his patron. Not fulfilling their duties in an appropriate manner and obsessed with food, Mr. Grant finally dies due to excessive eating, Mr. Elton marries a woman suffering from inferiority complex and Mr. Collins finally flees from the wrath of his patron and is advised to look at someone who has “more to give”(362). All these clergymen lack self-esteem, grace and dignity. According to the regulations prevalent these clergymen are expected to behave in accordance with the position that they hold, but their actions show irregularities due to their involvement with the physical world rather than the spiritual or moral one. Through the protagonists we learn to admire qualities that we expect from these church functionaries .i.e. moral elevation.

In *P & P*, we see different people belonging to different social setups react in dissimilar manner. Lady Catherine, a socially conscious woman lives in the past and wants to retain it so she tells Elizabeth that her daughter and Darcy are supposed to get married simply because

“from their infancy, they have been intended for each other,” and that this “union” was “planned” while the said individuals were “in their cradles”. It is an unwritten law of the society that the great Lady has in mind when she is referring to this event. She has no forbearance for those who plan to endanger its execution especially if the individual is “a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family.” She considers it against “propriety and delicacy” (335). In the part of the world to which I belong we keep on hearing the same story repeatedly. The Lady Catherines of our world not only firmly agree with this, they would even go to the extent of shedding blood in the name of honour. Girls die unmarried because they are betrothed to names rather than humans. Men and women either wait or are wedded against their wishes to live a life of perpetual suffering. In all societies some ‘evils’ are justified as good and some goods are marginalized as ‘evil’.⁴⁵

Though quiet and ill at ease in Meryton, Darcy is in his element among the grandeurs of Pemberley. There we meet him as a very different person. All the reserve is shed off. In Meryton he is cocooned in his self-created extreme isolation and he shows extreme reserve. He is a stranger there and recedes in the background while the rest of the company are enjoying themselves. Mr. Darcy considers the Meryton society as vulgar and “a punishment” for him “to stand up with” (9). Yet he is soon fascinated by the “easy playfulness” of Elizabeth’s manners which are in contrast to his reservations and it surprises him. Like the prodigal son he reveals the social legacy that he carries within himself and though he tries to stay aloof and alienated he falls short of his efforts. We observe that Darcy’s letter makes Elizabeth conscious of the vulgarity of her family’s behaviour so when she meets them she observes their behaviour in a detached manner. She is shocked to hear Miss King called “such a nasty little freckled thing” and “the coarseness of the expression” (207) does not escape her. This is her society and now

she can understand “that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed”(187), by her mother and sisters, which deprives Jane of her happiness.

Darcy has to surpass all class differences, relax the hard and fast observance of manners if he is to open his heart before Elizabeth. It is the discourse of emotions that she understands well. Only then he can achieve domestic felicity. Elizabeth also must learn that all rich people are not like Lady Catherine and Miss Bingley. She must distinguish between them and Miss Darcy whose “manners were perfectly unassuming and gentle” (243). She learns to honour Mr. Darcy’s “generous compassion” (345) in comparison to his aunt’s snobbishness.

Elizabeth and the other heroines of Miss Austen’s novels become “matured, chastened, cultivated, to whom fidelity has brought only greater depth and sweetness instead of bitterness and pain” (Southam.167). With dignity and grace they manage to leave a favourable impression on their male counterparts; teaching them respect and esteem. The protagonists must move from their environment so as to increase their knowledge of other people, their opinions and ideas. They must be allowed time to reflect and make comparisons so as to view their own set beliefs comparatively and objectively. In this way they are able to bridge the gulf that ultimately causes alienation.

There are times when Austen’s stance becomes the projection of our own desires and understanding and hence we as readers look forward to the entrance of a single man with a large fortune. We perceive the availability of eligible ladies and wait impatiently, like Mrs. Bennet, how and when he will take notice of them. The suspense grows and even a cynic, like Mr. Bennet, who never stirs out of his study, is caught by the fever and becomes the first to visit and satisfy his curiosity about Mr. Bingley.

Human nature here is reflected without exaggeration and weaknesses revealed without spite. Society reveals itself in these small instances of daily routine that its members follow unassumingly. The insignificant jealousies of life do not harm people when there is so much goodwill to compensate. The Meryton assembly unanimously, and without conflict allows Bingley to pay attention to the most beautiful girl of their community and their liberal admittance “To be sure that *did* seem as if he admired her—indeed I rather believe he *did*”(15). The generosity and goodwill is based on love and understanding and hence the prediction of Bingley’s interest in Jane is a familiar outcome. The psyche of the society is reflected in the psyche of its individuals.

Darcy’s habit of meditation helps him see beyond the surface “I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow” (24). The Meryton magic has worked on him; he is soon captivated by the ‘eyes’ of a ‘tolerable’ woman when he observes more closely. Not only does he manage to see the “beautiful” behind the “tolerable” but when Elizabeth looks at him “archly, and turned away” he is not “injured” but starts “thinking of her with some complacency” (23). He learns to contrast the life of “eat, drink, and play cards” (31) to that of “talking”, “dancing”, “visiting” and “reading”.

He knows that he possesses excellent manners but has to discover if he possesses self-awareness. He is forced to argue with himself whether he is “all politeness” (23) or needs to behave “in a more gentlemanlike manner” (182). Darcy’s views go through a gradual transformation about the same person in question. It begins from “tolerable” (9) to “a pretty woman” (24) and a time comes when he declares her as “one of the handsomest woman” of his “acquaintance” (253). All these reactions reflect the views of different social standards that go through a change with interaction. The same difference of opinion exists about Mr. Darcy, till

Elizabeth learns more about him when she visits Pemberley and realizes that “Mr. Darcy improves on acquaintance” (220). We, as readers feel that

Elizabeth does not approve the behaviour of her sisters and her mother but does she moralize on good behaviour or practice of propriety, well no! All she does is speaking of her fears before her father when it comes to Lydia while she would ‘blush’ at her mother’s behaviour.⁴⁶

It is at Pemberley that she becomes painfully aware of the moral deficiency of her family.

The “wretched business” (261) of Lydia’s elopement further intensifies her sense of guilt which earlier she did not feel. She learns to see the faulty behaviour of her family with a new perspective. Her visit to Pemberley not only educates her about human behaviour, it makes her analyze her ‘self’. She finally achieves self-realization; “She was humbled, she was grieved; she repented” (292).

The marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth is a union of two points of view about life as reflected in the places where they live. They carry in their personalities peculiar tints of their environment. Pemberley, though outwardly a paradise on earth, needed to synthesize with Meryton to make it wholesome and complete. Pemberley becomes the symbol of elegance and grace, “the park was very large, and contained great variety of ground...with beautiful wood stretching over a wide extent” (228). The great house “was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground” backed by “high woody hills” with a “stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater” which forced Elizabeth to think “that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something”. The housekeeper is “much less fine, and more civil”, the interior had rooms “lofty and handsome, and their furniture suitable to the fortune [ten thousand pounds] of their proprietor” (229). All the epithets used for the description of the house, “large,” “great,” “wide,” “handsome,” “rising,” “swelled” etc. bring something very majestic to mind till

one feels a pigmy before its stature. It is at this moment that Elizabeth unconsciously agrees with Charlotte's statement of Darcy having a right to be proud.

In comparison to the union of Elizabeth and Darcy we see three other marriages. Jane and Bingley share a "general similarity of feelings and taste" (328) but both lack the intelligence and sense of Darcy and Elizabeth. This is why Mr. Bennet very aptly remarks about them saying that "You are...so complying, that nothing will be resolved on; so easy that every servant will cheat you; and so generous, that you will always exceed your income" (328). Yet, they will manage to remain happy. While the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Collins is a sham, which will be carried on successfully because of Charlotte's excellent management, where as Lydia and Wickham are "always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought"(166) devoid of domestic felicity.

The same process of self-awareness we observe in *Emma*. The protagonist's disdain for Mr. Martin is based strictly on class difference. Emma fails to realize that Harriet is socially a 'nobody', while Martin is a farmer. Emma tries to do all in her power to find an eligible match for Harriet. She thinks that Harriet's connection with her will make her socially superior. She consistently voices such ideas and makes a mess of Harriet's life for the society refuses to agree with her. Mr. Elton's proposal to Emma makes her revise her views regarding class differences and the evils that arise due to it. She soon learns the truth "who can think of Miss Smith when, Miss Woodhouse is near!" (131) Emma's appraisal of Mr. Elton as "proud, assuming, conceited; very full of his own claims, and little concerned about the feelings of others"(135) mirrors her own self and for that she has to go through an education of self-realization. She learns that so far she has been deceiving herself.

Self-deception is another important issue that prevails in Miss Austen's novels. She proves it to be a common failing, that hinders one from acknowledging the truth, and because of it individuals as well as society suffer. Emma a believer of regulated behaviour must learn about her own irregularities as does Elizabeth in *P & P*. Though Austen avoids discussing the socially tabooed evils but in *Lady Susan Vernon*, a materialistic widow in the novel *Lady Susan*, we get a glimpse of a moral agenda though the author would never state it. Lady Susan resorts to all sorts of mean tactics and moral degradation in order to marry a rich man, and get a rich husband for her daughter, so as to enjoy a comfortable life. Through this character the readers becomes conscious of such characters scattered in their own immediate society. They are those whose vision cannot penetrate beyond the physical. They deceive themselves by forming wrong notions of happiness and hence suffer inwardly though they manage to achieve physical comforts.

In the sensitive world of *P & P*, even Lydia with her limited idea of happiness is treated with compassion. She is not condemned by the people to the extent of social excommunication for the people realize that her error was done due to faulty upbringing. By presenting Miss Darcy as a contrast to Lydia, Austen subtly proves a point. Miss Darcy, who had been brought up to be a lady and much attention paid to her education, also falls in the same snare that entraps Lydia. Georgiana has a moral sense which guides her to disclose her guilt and the timely intervention saves her while Lydia left to her scanty discretion fails to see the negative implications of her actions. Miss Darcy is not only ethically sound, but naturally intelligent; which becomes her social attribute, while Lydia like her mother lacks wisdom. Interestingly, Miss Anne de Bourgh, who has been brought up with more than usual deliberation makes us realize that too much care has spoiled her. She is overshadowed by her domineering mother.

This has harmed her so much that she has virtually no confidence in her own self. Deprived of any personal independence she becomes reticent and timid. Elizabeth is intelligent enough to understand her problem of being a lonely child who is expected to do more than her capacity; hence she retreats in the background.

Without presenting any ideas of an ideal way of rearing good individuals Miss Austen simply presents her characters; leaving them open to the readers of all times and all ages in their particular era to decide for themselves as to what their faults are and what improvements are required. There are Darcys, Collins, Catherines and Bennets, around us even today! P & P does not aim at resolving class conflicts, ideological and religious controversies, and intellectual debates. Rather the focus is on truth and harmony in the form of relationships based on understanding. The day to day events help the characters clarify the intricacies of the confused social order and prove their existence as well as define their own limitations. They are able to adopt themselves with changing times in a positive manner. When it comes to landed gentry Austen's art reveals a certain regard for those who look after the welfare of their estates rather than ignore making provisions for future development.⁴⁷

The real touchstone of social progression is between interaction of the members of the society so as to broaden their horizon and understanding especially those of the upper class who move in their own circle and stick to their preconceived notions of civility. Darcy would have remained "proud" (80) and "conceited" (11) had he not come in contact with the people in Meryton. It is Elizabeth whose "little endeavour at civility", jolts him up. He goes through the painful process of humanizing "against his 'will'", "reason" and "character" (180) and understands the motives, conduct and views of others to get an insight into life and become "better people"⁴⁸.

Those who believe that “Jane Austen’s perspective is to reinforce traditional values by showing the errors that result if one deviates from them” (Eagleton and Pierce 29), ought to remember that traditions and conventions have to undergo a change. Austen’s attitude towards the different classes of her society reveals it. There is no place in the future for people like Lady Catherine who refuse to comply with the changing norms, believing in the preservation of feudal ideals by her objection to Elizabeth/Darcy relationship. If she wants to remain a part of the new society she must learn to adjust her idea with those of the new world.

Our desires and criteria as well as concept of eligibility differ with our situations in life. The lesson that we learn is that change is necessary; what goes up according to the law of nature has to come down whether it be material objects, unsubstantial intense human desires, emotions or social norms. The rules, traditions and codes of behaviour of society in general, ought to go through a change with the changing times. People who accommodate others and the points of view of others experience true happiness. Those who get stuck in their own beliefs and visions never see beyond their restricted self. The reader, like Miss Austen’s characters, also goes through education of self-realization.

Notes

¹ These lines are taken from Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* (London: David Campbell Ltd, 1991), p. 24. All subsequent references in the text of this chapter are to this novel and are represented by the letters, P & P, followed by page number.

² This issue is further elaborated by a critic who says that “Austen writes about a society that is hierarchical but is also a meritocracy. In all her novels there is a high degree of movement between the classes she describes and, because there is a method and a logic for that movement, even a powerful character who represents the Establishment, such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh, cannot impede it. It is here that *Pride and Prejudice* focuses on human agency within neoclassicism’s enlightened and reasonable belief in social and economic and moral progress” (Giffin 92).

³ Austen’s attitude towards the financial problems of common people of her society as well as the cruelties of the aristocracy and her sympathy for the gentry makes her, according to

Daiches, 'in a sense a Marxist before Marx'³. While Woolf believes that "in applying the Marxian dialectic to Jane Austen, one must, of course, always remember that she is one of the greatest and subtlest of satirists"(50); one cannot restrict Austen's views to any particular theory. I agree with Mrs. Woolf but would like to add that Jane Austen's concern and her approach to the prevailing problems is multifaceted and Mr. Daiches' assessment can be one of the many interpretations of her work.

⁴ In *Pride and Prejudice* we come across certain terms that carry different meaning for different people. For Mrs. Bennet Mr. Lucas is a gentleman because he is "man of fashion", "genteel" and "easy". Furthermore, he has "always something to say to everybody" (40). For Lady Catherine Elizabeth's uncles don't come up to her version of a gentleman.(336).

⁵ There are those who are vain and shallow in their attitudes are satirized. "In spite of her caricatures of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine, Austen portrays life in Kent as a model of decency and good order when compared to life in Hertfordshire; although a better model awaits the heroine and the reader in Derbyshire. However, that better model cannot become an ideal model until Elizabeth is able to make her necessary contribution to it" (106) and later he states that "Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine may be objects of satire, but even Austen suggests that both of them are functioning quite well in their respective clerical and secular roles. Neither of them could be called progressive, but in spite of this they are achieving a degree of social cohesion that the British thought necessary to prevent social instability and revolution" (107). Michael Giffin, *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England*. (Gordonsville, VA, USA Palgrave Macmillan 2002).

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10044866>. Hardy believes that in Austen's novels "the aristocrats are heavily satirized, the people in trade treated sympathetically, harsh satire being reserved for their snobbish or hypocritical connections, like Mrs. Elton and Miss Bingley"(106). But we never forget that both these women are humans. Their tragedy is their fear of being ignored in the mainstream so they overact their part. Miss Bingley craving for Darcy's attention tries to remain "persevered" in her "motives" though Darcy persistently ignores her. Mrs. Elton, conscious of her money, suffers from the same fear of being a 'nobody' before Emma, who, being rich, is an icon of social status. Both women are victims of vanity and so like Sir Elliot in *Persuasion* prone to irregular behaviour.

⁶ It is interesting to note that Darcy and Bingley disregard all class differences, when they fall in love. Their decision is not hastily made but "in vain" do they "struggle" to realize that "it will not do" for their "feelings cannot be suppressed." They go through a process of self-analysis and decide only when completely convinced. In Miss Austen's other novels too, the protagonists marry women below their social status or wealth for they aim at love and happiness. Behaving in an unregulated way they become the tools for the ongoing transformation. Those who marry for money get unworthy life partners e.g. Willoughby and Lucy Steele in *Sense and Sensibility*, Mr. Elton in *Emma* and Wickham in *P & P*, who literally bargain for a wife in financial terms. Their desires revolve around money and a desire to belong to the rich.

⁷ For information of this age see David Spring, 'Interpreters of Jane Austen's Social World: Literary Critics and Historians', *Jane Austen: New Perspectives* ed. Janet Todd (New York and London: Holmes and Meir) 1983. R. S. Neale *1860-1850: A Social History* (London:

Routledge and Kegan Paul 1981). Gary Kelly. *English Fiction of the Romantic Period, 1789-1830* (London and New York: Longman Pub. 1989).

⁸ Money is of great consequence and easily available to those who would seriously strive for it using fair or foul means. In his article titled *Money* ⁸ Edward Copeland recounts the different social markers that decide the worth of the individual by the people of that time e.g. how many thousand pounds an individual earns, owns an estate, keeps a carriage and horses, number of servants, mode of travel etc. Austen seems to be conscious of the value of frugality that was gathering momentum. Edward Copeland's essay on *Money Class* printed in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* Edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1997. Giffen confirms to it, "In an Austen novel, even families that appear wealthy to the reader still need to be careful with their capital because they live in a society dominated by unregulated capitalism where there are so many claims on their private capital. Few of Austen's parents have enough capital to provide their offspring with an independence or a competency, which is why Charlotte has much to teach Elizabeth about the role of necessity and pragmatism, and the function of good management, in Georgian marriages"(Giffen 98). This created confusion which is apparent in all Austen's novels. The landed gentry were moving towards impoverishment because of their lack of proper interest in their estates. Mr. Bennet in *P & P*, spends every penny that he earns from his land; Mr. Elliot in *Persuasion* has to leave Kellynch Hall because of 'the heavy bills of his "trades-people" and his inability to "devise any means of lessening their expenses without compromising their dignity, or relinquishing their comforts in a way not to be borne"' (10). The traders, and those who earned through their participation in navel adventures, were becoming financially strong. The strict social boundaries are being redefined and one is led to question the social equality of Admiral Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* with that of Admiral Croft in *Persuasion*; for one belonged to the family of landed gentry and the other had gathered wealth through navel exploits. The former, acts with arrogance, conscious of his status while the other reveals good manners and concern for snug in the knowledge of his wealth he has established his new identity.

⁹ There are the likes of Collins in *P & P*, who degrade themselves by feeding the vanities of the aristocrats in order to profit materially but, in Miss Austen's novels they end up in becoming pathetic figures. Mrs. Clay in *Persuasion* and Tom Musgrove in *The Watsons* lose their own identity and respect while trailing after Elliots and Osbornes.

¹⁰ Those with family wealth passed to them from earlier generations consider it their privilege to be exclusively regarded and respected. They hurt the feelings of the others as does Lady Catherine and even Darcy, while those who were acquiring wealth emphatically claimed to be their equals. The bourgeois, in their effort of trying to improve their social status end up in social mimicking.¹⁰ Even Miss Bingley behaves with lack of propriety when she reveals her greed in *P & P* as does Mrs. Elton in *Emma*. They avoid those who are inferior in status and hence the reader notes that the Bingley sisters never become friendly with the Lucas family.

¹¹ This quotation has been taken from Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*.

¹² Hardy. Barbra, *A Reading of Jane Austen* (London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J: The Athlone Press 1997).

¹³ The general environment of Hertfordshire is peaceful and even if there are jealousies between Mrs. Bennet and Lady Lucas, they are of a very petty nature, hence of no consequence.

¹⁴ Commenting on the attitude of Bingley's sisters Giffin writes, "The sisters of Charles Bingley may be wealthy in their own right, but they are just as opportunistic, and wanting the advantage of Darcy's company, as anyone else at the Meryton assembly. They are handsome and well-educated 'fine ladies' from a 'respectable family in the north of England' who are 'proud and conceited'; 'in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank'; and they 'think well of themselves, and meanly of others'. Their attitude is tempered, however, by an awareness 'that their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade', and by the knowledge that the Bingley fortune will not lose its taint of trade until their family purchases a substantial landed estate and marries into the Establishment. That is why Miss Bingley would prefer that her brother bought an estate such as Pemberley, with a similarly high aspect, rather than rented an estate such as Netherfield, which probably has a low aspect (nether-field). That is also why she hopes to marry Darcy, and why she does not want to become a relative of the Bennets. Austen conveys a heavy irony when the Bingley sisters laugh at the Bennet's 'low connections', and note that they have an uncle in law living in Meryton and another uncle in trade living near Cheapside, because for all their pretensions their own connections are not much higher than those of the Bennets"(Giffen100). Giffin, Michael. *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England.*, (Gordonsville, VA, Palgrave Macmillan 2002). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10044866&ppg=115>

¹⁵ Austen suggests this in all her novels and according to McMaster ' the long-established but untitled landowning family does seem to gather Austen's deep respect, especially if its income comes from land and a rent-roll; and her two most eligible heroes Mr. Darcy of Pemberley and Mr. Knightly of Donwell Abbey, come from this class, the landed gentry.'¹¹⁷ Juliet McMaster's essay *Class* printed in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* Edited by Copeland. Edward and McMaster. Juliet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997)

¹⁶ See *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997).

¹⁷ Through *Jane Austen's Letters* ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 1995) we learn that she regularly visited her relatives. In her novels people are interested in each other's affairs; they not only gossip but also enjoy each other's company. Visiting friends and neighbours was a regular feature of their society. She had very strong familial ties as revealed in her letters. Her keen interest is apparent the way she kept track of the activities of her family and this we see in the relationship of Elizabeth and Jane. The trust between them helps them go through the trials of life and the changing circumstances.

¹⁸ Common people, in those days, were afraid of the censure and norms of society that promoted secrecy as part of good breeding and openness as crude and improper. Desire for wealth was a common flaw and we see those who are already affluent are bent upon increasing their wealth and transacting matrimonial affairs as if they are making a business deal. Miss Bingley discerns her brother's preference for Jane so she frustrates all Jane's hopes through her letter by relating her hope of meeting the rich Miss Darcy and "entertain of her being hereafter our sister" (113). She sets her heart upon Darcy considering herself as his social equal. Elizabeth, disregarding such differences is a firm believer in love. She entertains the hope of a union between Bingley and Jane for she considers money and social status merely the means of felicity, not the end. She does not understand Charlotte's decision of accepting Mr. Collins

though she is an intelligent woman. She fails to understand the politics of her society, so she must make effort to learn.

¹⁹Miss Austen mostly uses the term ‘society’ either for community or company. She is well aware of the effect of environment on an individual. It is the requirements of the society that curtails the independence of man. According to Sherry, “society” for Jane Austen is “the presence of other individuals with whom it is either a duty or a pleasure to mix” (611). He further suggests that in P & P “visiting and news” (3) are strong motives to bind the small community for it shows their interest in each other. Though these are the irregularities yet they regularize social intimacy of the general public.

²⁰ James Sherry writes that, to the Victorians propriety stood “for a kind of rigid and even hypocritical adherence to the outward customs and usages of polite society”(617). He thinks that for Miss Austen the word meant ‘proper’. In *Pride and Prejudice* it suggests a “a kind of behaviour which is particularly careful not to violate the privacy, the integrity, and the right to respectability of every individual” (618).

Sherry. James, *Pride and Prejudice: The Limits of Society Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* > Vol. 19, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1979), pp. 609-622

Stable URL: [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0039-](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0039-3657%28197923%2919%3A4%3C609%3APAPTLO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5)

3657%28197923%2919%3A4%3C609%3APAPTLO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5

²¹ “Mr. and Mrs. Darcy become the novel’s ideal examples of this evolutionary process, as a man and woman who have earned their maturity, and have been empowered by a love that is both human and divine. They will exercise a complementary headship that is of private and public importance because it overcomes the bad oikonomia of Longbourn, improves the less than ideal oikonomia of Hunsford, and perfects the already good oikonomia of Pemberley. Elizabeth and Darcy are unique in the novel, and their joint headship of Pemberley contributes ‘more than any other relationship in the novel can contribute’ to the physical and metaphysical soteria of each other, of their extended family, and of the wider community they will influence for the common wealth. As squire and first lady of Pemberley, Mr and Mrs Darcy become magnanimous benefactors who understand the wisdom of tolerance and forgiveness, and the necessity of encouraging the good aspects and discouraging the evil aspects of human nature” (Giffin 93).

²² For her “These people belong to a whole world of familiar acquaintances, who are, notwithstanding their old-fashioned dresses and quaint expressions, more alive to us than a great many of the people among whom we live. We know so much more about them to begin with. Notwithstanding a certain reticence and self-control which seems to belong to their age, and with all their quaint dresses, and ceremonies, and manners, the ladies and gentlemen in *Pride and Prejudice* and its companion novels seem like living people out of our own acquaintance transported bodily into a bygone age, represented in the half-dozen books that contain Jane Austen’s works” (164-65). Southam, B. C. *Jane Austen, 1870-1940*. (London, UK: Routledge, 1995). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10058103&ppg=178>

²³ People do talk about irregularities of behaviour, but busy with their own affairs they tend to bother less so juxtaposing the society of Somersetshire in *Persuasion*. We see Mrs. Russell not marrying Sir Elliot though he is eligible and there is intimacy, yet people do not gossip about them. Both live at a very convenient distance with nothing to oppose the event, yet

they do not marry. The reason is, firstly, because she is “extremely well provided for” and secondly as Miss Austen ironically remarks that it “needs no apology to the public, which is rather apt to be unreasonably discontented, when a woman *does* marry again, than when she does *not*” (*Persuasion* 5). In *The Watsons* too Emma Watson’s aunt marries after her husband’s death and is censured even by her own nephews who consider her ‘an old fool’ (119) yet these judgments are not long considered. In the self complacent social morality individuals can react challenging the whole social psyche. Thus though unregulated it is yet regularized by strong characters.

²⁴ “Certainly, Charlotte’s marriage to Mr. Collins is not ideal, and Austen does have something much better in mind for Elizabeth; but Elizabeth and her parents show a sad lack of understanding towards Charlotte ‘as well as an unfortunate want of charity’ when she announces her engagement to Mr Collins. Elizabeth will achieve a greater, but still partial, understanding... which is an important part of her own journey into maturity” (Giffin 98).

²⁵ The same restraint we observe in the depiction of the social evils of her society. There are no references of Napoleonic Wars but indirect reference through the mention of men who are on sea or have recently come back from it. The militia regiment we hear posted near Meryton shows no urgency of action or alarm but merely moved to Brighton a bathing place where officers have time to dance and flirt. She does not mention war, perhaps because wars are depressing; they increase hatred and create a void among the individuals as well as nations. In her depiction of the society she seems to be more worried about the wars between the individuals of her society through their attitudes, views etc. and she would rather show a way to resolve the internal conflicts than relate the external issues. She must let the army of hatred and misunderstanding succumb so that individuals are at peace.²⁵ Captain Wentworth takes relish in relating the action at sea in which he took part and won laurels yet it his war with the society, who refused to associate him with the woman he desired, that makes him bitter towards Anne for he cannot win easily.

²⁶ For Kant morality is closely bound up with one’s duties and obligations. ‘good will’ is important for Kant but it ought to be without selfish motive or force. “Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except Good Will”. See *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Richard B. Brandt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1961).

²⁷ Miss Austen’s consistent use of some terms regarding the behaviour of the society is an interesting study in itself. ‘Decorum’, ‘propriety’, ‘manners’, ‘accomplishment’, ‘esteem’, religion, entertainment, household chores, traveling, balls and parties, are closely related with moral implications as well as social sophistication. In Austen’s society the teaching of perfect manners became a part of superficial requirement of good breeding. The likes of Lady Catherine de Bourgh, having formally learned the art of good manners consider themselves as institutions. They direct the lives of the others failing to see the absurdity of their own behaviour. While simpletons like Mary Lucas can be so terrified out of their wits and “she thought herself obliged, on her return, to undo all the work of the morning, and pack her trunk afresh” (202). Even Darcy may feel the rudeness of his aunt but all that he does is to look “a little ashamed of his aunt’s ill breeding” (164).

²⁸ John Gay, “fable 111, the Baboon and the Poultry, To a Levee hunter.” The first six lines of the poem follow:

We frequently misplace esteem
By judging men by what they seem,
To birth, wealth power, we should allow
Precedence, and our lowest bow:
In that is due distinction shown;
Esteem is virtue’s right alone.

This reference is taken from Joseph Wiesenfarth *The Errand of Form* (New York: Fordham University Press 1967).

²⁹ Davidson writes that ‘Wollstonecraft calls for a revolution in manners that will transform relations between men and women by rescuing the latter from the forms of modesty that promote insincerity (Davidson 76).

³⁰ These can be influential people, the social norms and even one’s own conscience.

³¹ Jenny believes that “I am no more likely to identify myself as a hypocrite than I am to call myself a cannibal, although I may do either so long as I invoke a rhetoric of confession or conversion that separates my present identity from the past one I name and thereby disavow. When I call someone else a hypocrite, I point to a gap between what she says and what she does. I sometimes also attribute to the hypocrite a broader, more pervasive deceitfulness whose practice can include the insincerities associated with self-control and good manners. In the last case, if the mask of politeness is sufficiently flawless, I may find it difficult to distinguish the hypocrite from any other member of civil society. Indeed, if everyone suddenly stopped lubricating social interactions with politeness, the consequences for the institutions of daily life, families, schools, religious organizations, companies, governments, would likely be catastrophic”(1) . Davidson. Jenny, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness : Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*. (West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2004). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10130440&ppg=13>

³² For detail see the essay on *Setting and Character* by Charles j. McCann in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Pride and Prejudice* ed. By E. Rubenstein (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc. 1960).

³³ Barbra Hardy, *Properties and Possessions in Jane Austen’s Novels* This Chapter appears in Juliet McMaster *Jane Austen’s Achievements* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976).

³⁴ The idea of social transition can be seen in the Musgrove family in *Persuasion* exhibiting change without conflict. The place where they live: Uppercross, offers a direct contrast to the Kellynch Hall where the family love seems to suffer under the weight of personal

and selfish motives. “The Musgroves are looking forward towards modernity as warmly as Sir Walter Elliot retraces his lineage in his favourite book....The Musgroves are...happy assured, comfortable in their world” (Price. 263). With great dignity they would tolerate the snobbery of Mary Elliot; though not without reservations; but refrain from making it an issue. The general atmosphere of their house is warm and loving and according to Mr. Craik “A new theme appears at Uppercross, that of family affection and domestic ties” (Craik.178). Without pretensions they welcome all and hence low connections are as dearly welcomed as the high ones: Anne Elliot is treated like the Hayters with equal civility.

³⁵ In her realistic portrayal of the inevitable connections between the public and the private spheres and in her allusions to that complex society beyond the personal interests of her characters, Jane Austen exposes the fallacy of this claim for personal autonomy. Given the fact that living together in society necessarily requires dependence and compromise, the belief that one can withdraw or simply gratify oneself is morally irresponsible and, finally, practically untrue. Even Mrs. Smith has Nurse Rooke to connect her to the public world of Bath, and as Anne’s prolonged and problematic courtship of Wentworth proves, even the most adamant personal desire must be defined within other social relations which are also configurations of power. Weisser, Susan Ostrov (Editor). *Women & Romance : A Reader*. (New York, NY, USA: New York University Press, 2001), p. 268.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10032488&ppg=283> down loaded on 11-12-08

³⁶ Daniel P. Gunn, *In the Vicinity of Winthrop: Ideological Rhetoric in Persuasion*, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Mar 1987).<http://links.jstor.org/sici?=0891211-1-08>

³⁷ “A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. Then, according to Grotius, a people is a people before it gives itself. The gift is itself a civil act, and implies public deliberation. It would be better, before examining the act by which a people gives itself to a king, to examine that by which it has become a people; for this act, being necessarily prior to the other, is the true foundation of society” Rousseau.

³⁸ Mr. Giffin mentions his dissatisfaction with the ‘unregulated capitalism’ of Georgian society on page 17,34,8,119,149.176,177,and187 of his book *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England*.

³⁹ Carlyle calls these fashionably dressed men and women as “The Dandy” (272)

⁴⁰ Enlightenment was spreading fast and in the 18th century. We see many female writers attempting to enter the literary world. Novelists like Scott, Mrs. Radcliff, and Fanny Burney etc created an interest in characters rather than events. What happened was of little value as compared to whom it happened and consequences that had effected the characters

⁴¹ On the other hand Sir Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, though a tyrant and conservative in his opinions in the beginning, goes through an education and we note a progressive change in his attitude regarding social values. They are “sick of ambitions and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper”, he learns to appreciate the power of love and practice of modesty and grace that brings domestic felicity in the form of Fanny “indeed the daughter that he wanted” (486).

⁴² Traditionally the younger girls in the family did not “come out” until their elder sisters were married or had been in society for a sufficient number of years that they had fallen into the

category of “old maid”. Mrs. Bennet did not observe this tradition as she was anxious to get any or all of the girls married as soon as possible, and she also wanted them to enjoy themselves. This might make Elizabeth’s answer to Lady Catherine more understandable. Also notice that when Charlotte becomes engaged to Mr. Collins “the younger girls formed hopes of coming out a year or two sooner”. <http://www.jasa.net.au/study/indivsoc.htm> 12-2-08 Jane Austen Society of Australia: Study Guide Pamela Whalan *Understanding the society in which Jane Austen sets Pride and Prejudice* Pamela Whalan has been a member of the Study Day Committee of JASA since 1999 and has been involved in the successful presentation of study days on *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey*. She has directed successful seasons of *I Have Five Daughters* (an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*) and an adaptation for the stage of *Emma*. She has written a stage adaptation of *Mansfield Park* and directed this play for the Genesian Theatre Company Inc. in Sydney. This paper has been adapted from a talk given to students at Reddam House in June 2002.

⁴³ Shakespeare’s drama, *As You Like It* is set in the forest of Arden where peace reigns.

⁴⁴ See Rousseau’s *Social Contract* by Lester G Crocker (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Case Western Reserve University 1968).

⁴⁵ In our society ‘chars’ which is a crude form of drug is socially acceptable in villages though disapproved in cities. Western reader may laugh at the ridiculousness of Lady Catherine’s behaviour but we in the East understand it for we are living through it. Infancy betrothals are common affairs.

⁴⁶ Mary Waldron, *Jane Austen & the Fiction of Her Time*. (Port Chester, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1999) (43).
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=2000764&ppg=52>

⁴⁷ Mr. Darcy’s keen interest in his estate is shown by the attention he pays to the improvement of his library and his estate brings prosperity and affluence. In *Emma* Mr. Knightly would rather make improvements in his estate than have special horses for his carriage. Those who exhibit talents are shown to be rising in the social order and hence we see Captain Wentworth increasing his wealth and proving eligible for Anne Elliot in *Persuasion*. Mr. Gardiner, in *P & P* we note uses his cool common sense thus not only increasing his wealth by being able to afford trips but also bringing up harmony in the discordant household of the Bennets. All these characters are introducing improvements in some way or the other which is very positive for the welfare of the others too.

⁴⁸ The phrase appears in D. D. Devlin’s book *Jane Austen and Education* where he says that ‘Education, for the heroines [and other characters], is a process through which they come to see clearly themselves and their conduct, and by this new vision or insight become better people.’ (1) D. D. Devlin, *Jane Austen and Education* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1975).

Chapter Four

Sexual Power Politics

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 (Austen.20)

Marriage without love and respect for the partner is bound to be boring, and cold.

Charlotte and Collins, and Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are a good example of this. “Domestic felicity” (51) and happy married life are possible only if the bond between the two is based on mental affinity; spiritual kinship; understanding the personality of the other partner; and mutual respect. Otherwise the relationship is a sham in which one tries to exercise power over the other. This ultimately results in a sort of separation. That is to say the two might be living under the same roof but psychologically they are divorced. Charlotte confines herself to a “backwards” room in order to avoid meeting Mr. Collins frequently; and Mr. Bennet prefers to stay in his “study”. And thus goes a cold war between the two partners who, instead of supplementing and complementing each other, become a burden or a baggage that each has to bear in life. Such relationships are likely to end up in the form of divorce or separation or worse still, living together without physically and emotionally acknowledging each other’s presence as we see in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

A few questions in this context seem to persist in Austen’s novels, especially in *P & P*, about dynamics of domestic happiness through marriage. Does consciousness of power result in domestic happiness and provision of harmony and peace in the house? Are women aware of the

power that they have and can exercise? How does the uneven distribution of power affect domestic happiness in *P & P*?

Though apparently subdued and quiet, Charlotte Lucas is a strong woman. She is one of the several children of Mr. and Mrs. Lucas, and lives in a house “denominated” as “Lucas Lodge” (15) from the time the family moves in after making a “tolerable fortune” and Mr. Lucas receives “knighthood” (14). And Charlotte Lucas lives a life of pretension, wealth, and status thereafter. The new name given to their house is symbolic of the new identity her family acquires. Their money and status change quite a few things for the members of the Lucas family. Sir Lucas acquires the mannerism of the landed gentry—a class which itself is in transition. Miss Lucas, a twenty-seven year old “sensible, [and] intelligent young woman” wants to get married which she believes is the ultimate object of life otherwise she does not think very “highly either of men or matrimony” (15 and 117).

Like many women Charlotte too dreads the thought of “dying an old maid” (117). She does not realize that getting married is not an easy thing. Little does she know that it is a process full of politics, and effectively and successfully maneuvering the tactics of “gentlemen” in questions and the women related to them. Charlotte Lucas, it seems, needs to get married to have the freedom that society denies to unmarried women. She does not want to be known as the “wretched one” as unmarried woman was popularly called in the nineteenth century.¹ In order to get “a comfortable home” (120), as she tells Elizabeth, Charlotte does all that it takes to “secure” (19) Mr. Collins. She becomes very active after she learns that Elizabeth has turned down Mr. Collins’ proposal. She makes her moves very skillfully. She makes sure Elizabeth and Collins do not get back together, nor does she give him any time to recover from the shock. Charlotte gives him the attention he hopes to get from Elizabeth, and thus Mr. Collins’ emotional focus

shifts from Elizabeth to Charlotte. Like an intelligent predator, Charlotte plans her moves and is always a step or two ahead of Mr. Collins. She waits for him in the window very early in the morning, and pretends to have run into him by chance in the lane when she sees him coming towards her house. She “instantly set out to meet him accidentally in the lane” (116). The emotional vacuum in Mr. Collins’ life is filled, and Charlotte’s tactics win her the man she wants to secure for herself. And, Mr. Collins literally and metaphorically “throw[s] himself at her feet” (116). Charlotte, with her cunning and intelligence, sucks Mr. Collins into her world where perhaps domestic felicity is not an object; economic and social security is. The struggle to acquire a master is in fact a desire to become a mistress; establish a domain where the woman is able to exert her power without the interference of the society; and without the impact of the external power that hinders and restricts one’s wishes. The idea of an ideal marriage in *P & P* does not favour the power of a single individual over another. It rather revolves around the synthesis of the desires of two individuals who must learn to respect each other and play complementary roles in the growth of their relationship. Given the nature of Charlotte’s relation with Mr. Collins, she does not achieve a good marriage; she only gets the power associated with marriage—something that she wants.

Charlotte’s power over others is imperceptible; a person as shrewd and intelligent as Lady Catherine fails to see it. She handles the formidable Lady Catherine well, who often invites Charlotte to dinner; condescension is reserved for her. She deals with Collins even more tactfully, and keeps him at bay; Mr. Collins hardly ever becomes conscious of her dominance. He very proudly says, “My dear Charlotte and I have but one mind and one way of thinking” (203), which ironically is so true: things have to happen the way Charlotte wants them or they don’t happen. Catherine manipulates Collins in a manner that he has to follow the line that she

draws for him. Her accomplishments are unique and she exploits her power admirably. Her use of power politics goes mostly undetected; Elizabeth is the only one who understands the way Charlotte functions and makes people around her function. In Charlotte Elizabeth finds a person who wanted to secure a man for herself and wanted to settle down. But now that she was married, she was fighting with herself as if convincing herself that she had all that she wanted from marriage but knowing that she in fact did not.

We understand Charlotte's motives to get married only after we know the social mores of the world of *P & P*.² We learn that though Charlotte considers Mr. Collins's society to be "irksome" and that his "attachment to her must be imaginary, but still he would be her husband" and "marriage had always been her object, it was the only honorable provision for well educated young women of small fortune and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservation from want" (117). These lines fully explain the power struggle of the sexes in *P & P* as well as the social security that women of that era desired most. Marriage gives an identity to women though it is an acquired identity. She is to be known as Mrs. Collins. The same desire of identity we see in Lydia when she imagines herself "sign my name Lydia Wickham" (273) and thinks that it will make her relatives happy.

Charlotte Lucas is the only other woman in the novel who equals Elizabeth's intelligence. While the rest of the Meryton Assembly censures Darcy's behaviour, these two consider his pride justified. They know more about human nature and realize that being "so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself." He is the only, wealthy, independent son of an established family and even Elizabeth "could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine" (16, 17). All this, the two ladies believe, justifies Darcy's claim to a degree of exclusivity among the Meryton assembly.

Marriage gives women a social identity which in turn gives them respectability and a considerable position in the society. For women in the world of P & P, it is some kind of certificate showing their desirability and acceptance by men as worthy of making home. Getting married gives them the status which then makes them strut around. Most of the female characters in the novel are conscious of this social status. It seems that being married brands them to some kind of superiority. This is why Lydia, after getting married, flaunts her position as a married woman by letting her “hand just rest upon the window-frame, so that he might see the ring” (297). Elizabeth, on the other hand, does not subscribe to this school of thought. Her idea of marriage is different than that of the rest of the females in the novel. She is not the kind who would marry for the sake of having a man in her life or for being called a Mrs. Somebody. She is comfortable with herself, and does not give a damn about the taunts of the snobbish Lady Catherine, who considers her a social inferior to Darcy, by stating “He is a gentleman and I am a gentleman’s daughter” (336).³

Austen’s contemporary definition of desirability and beauty has gone through a drastic change and one of the latest feminist writers believe that “as long as the definition of beauty comes from outside women; we will continue to be manipulated by it” (Wolf 277). Charlotte, however, knows that only a man at his most vulnerable will take an interest in her and even then, if she makes the first move. The same advice she gives to Elizabeth in the matter regarding Jane’s attachment to Bingley that “a woman had better show more affection than she feels” (18) otherwise she would leave him in doubt. For herself she waits for her chance. Charlotte knows what men need and how to attract their attention hence her advice for Jane is to “make the most of every half-hour in which she can command his attention” (19). She warns Elizabeth that if Jane is not communicative she will not be able to hold Bingley in her power and we soon learn

how true she has been. Conscious of the approval of the society she would not mind resorting to a scheme while keeping her graces intact.

The consciousness of society's disapproval is reflected very strongly in *P & P* by those ladies that belong to the upper class while the females of the other classes consider it with less intensity. Lady Catherine may consider Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy, as pollution of "shades of Pemberley" but Elizabeth is "resolved to act in that manner, which will...constitute my happiness" (338). For women in general being free enough to make one's own decisions, is like entering an unknown territory so terrifying that it is better to avoid it. While some believe, that this freedom of choice "gives human beings, whether in isolation or in concert, the capacity to start over, to form new habits, even to establish spontaneously a new constitution of the soul or of society" (Miller 96).

Though socially a success among the Meryton crowd Elizabeth is practically a nobody among Darcy's or Bingley's class; she has no "dowry" and no "connections". She has to make a place for herself through her moral promotion by remaining unpolluted from the hypocrisies of the society; in short by remaining who she is. Elizabeth's social elevation is granted to her when she morally elevates Darcy by making him see his own defects. Darcy's rise begins when he tries to bring order to the disorder created by Wickham and finally acknowledges Elizabeth's part in this endeavor. "You shewed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased" (349).

Yet, Elizabeth is not understood by her people because they are not acquainted with her real worth; for them she is only a "desirable partner" (23), and even her mother fails to understand the reason why she refuses to marry Collins. Though her father had earlier disapproved her decision of not marrying Mr. Collins, yet he fails to understand her decision to

marry Darcy. Darcy understands her well because he has learned to look at the world from her perspective. She unconsciously becomes his mentor.

Darcy has to make a social contract to have Elizabeth agree to a sexual one. He has to accept her as an individual with an identity. He must learn to respect her connections and disregard her “country-town indifference to decorum” (32), and instead learn to appreciate her independence. According to Rousseau the woman’s education must “be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight” (Rousseau 342) which Elizabeth’s notions seem to defy vehemently. The Bingley sisters criticize her physical strength as she walks knee deep in mud to meet her sick sister. Such criticism according to Wollstonecraft is born out of a false system of education that considered women as “women rather than human creatures” and men have been “anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers” (1). Elizabeth’s assertion that she prefers to read whatever she likes seems to reflect Wollstonecraft’s idea of equal opportunities of education for men and women so that “the improvement must be mutual for both” and if this is not done then it will “not improve women but deprave them” (192). The old concept of separate education for women was based on submission and they were to follow set social norms while men explored the world.

Elizabeth needs to share her social powers with Darcy and get out of “self-isolating discourses” to a “public discourse”⁴ and achieve her objective, i.e., self-respect. It is the freedom given to her by her father that she learns to rely on her judgment whether right or wrong. In the beginning Darcy appears to be highly conscious of self-importance because society has given him a certain preference over the others in Meryton. With a free will, only bridled by social status, all his expectations of a life partner are those as are expected of him; but Elizabeth challenges them all with the force and power of her character. Her strong personality

makes him review his earlier stated qualities of a desirable woman. Although he approves the prevalent list of accomplishments i.e. knowledge of music, dancing, modern languages, manners of walking and carriage etc., he wants in his life a partner who has “something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind”. He does not fully realize what that improvement could be; he restricts it to “extensive reading” (36). Considering the list of accomplishments one is led to pity the mental state of the people of that time, for all the above mentioned qualities are superficially acquired. They lack substance and practicality. The qualities that may bring happiness to the spouse; a superior understanding of the other; are not counted among desirable traits. Interestingly, he still finds Elizabeth attractive, though she loudly claims “I am not a great reader” (33).

Besides power, marriage also gives financial stability to women. We notice in *P & P*, how women from middle class are striving for rich husbands for material comforts and how men with tolerable finances are in the lookout for wealthy girls. Even Austen’s own letters reveal this fact. According to the norm of that society the position of the females was very vulnerable⁵ and men increased their fortunes through marriage contracts that gave them authority over the dowry of their wives. Charlotte observes the rising interest of Col. Fitzwilliam in Elizabeth but realizes that it does not go beyond superficial appreciation; Elizabeth being no heiress. The Colonel knows his limitations and regrets that “A younger son, you know, must be inured to self-denial and dependence” because according to him the “habits of expense make us too dependent, and there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money” (173).

In the world of *P & P*, we deal with the obsession of acquiring “wealth” and “eligible bachelors”. It’s a world where the females are left to the mercy of circumstances and a wild run

for happiness. In P & P the females are on their own to acquire happiness, which is shallow for it depends on fulfillment of puny desires. Is there a daring person who would break these barriers and be able to lift high and appreciate inner contentment? True happiness we observe is achieved by those who possess moral and intellectual supremacy.

Wealth enhances the desirability of women and hence we observe that a single woman, if rich, is as much desirable as she is undesirable if poor; and hence we observe in some other novels of Austen's that in order to become noticeable women have to exert extra charms and rely on cheap schemes to make their presence felt. In *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey* we come across Steele sisters and Isabella Thorpe respectively, whose only obsession in life is to accomplish the task of getting a good catch in the form of a wealthy husband. They resort to politics of cunning schemes which deprives them of "prudence"—the main weapon in their fight for a decent survival, and unfortunately only a few are able to achieve their end. According to Philogomus, "Marriage is a sort of Lottery; nor can all the Precautions in the World insure its certain Happiness".⁶ Women have to struggle hard for a decent survival and yet they remain uncertain of happiness.

Yet, Elizabeth and her other counterparts in the Austen novels would not marry solely for the sake of an "honourable provision" (117). Elizabeth's refusal to marry solely for the sake of money: first, Collins, and then Darcy; and of Fanny Price, in *Mansfield Park*, are evidence of the change and diversion from the concept of traditional relationship between men and women. Men as rulers and female as ruled is a concept that was taken for granted in Austen's times⁷ and continues to be the accepted norm in most societies to date.

With men, in P & P, the marriage perspective becomes comparatively different especially if they turn out to be rich. Bingley and Darcy can afford to fall in love and prefer domestic

felicity over money. Their social status allows them to indulge in such schemes whereas gentlemen like Wickham and Colonel Fitzwilliam have to consider monetary considerations before they decide whom to marry. Wickham, who is poor and under a lot of financial strain and gets panicky in utter desperation, realizes that he has nothing to offer except his looks. This is why he makes blunders. He loses Georgiana and Miss King because he does not know how to use his power intelligently. Colonel Fitzwilliam, on the other hand, is very sensible and does not make mistakes even when he could have made some progress with Lady Catherine's daughter. Interestingly he does not hide his intentions from Elizabeth, as if that was the course of event he had to follow, and Elizabeth understood all that he was saying and doing.

Elizabeth listens to Fitzwilliam's conversation seriously and seems to understand his point of view to some extent. She knows well that the power of her beauty cannot compete with the power of money. She knows that the Colonel's conversation and the explanation are meant for her and hence; she gets "coloured" (173) with shame. . The matters of "great weight" are none but the emotional attachment but Fitzwilliam has to succumb before his "want of money" (173). Being a realistic and a true gentleman he does not want to misuse his sexual power no matter how much Elizabeth may attract him; all he could do is to wait for her for "at least an hour"(198) before leaving Rosings. He seems to respect Elizabeth's freedom of opinion.

The idea of freedom in P & P is a new one. Its novelty seems to frighten women and they do not know how to approach it. The Bingley sisters consider it "an abominable sort of conceited independence" as they watch Elizabeth enjoying its bliss. Instead of appreciating her Caroline tries to frighten Darcy by saying, "you would not wish to see *your sister* make such an exhibition" (32). When Elizabeth marries the formidable Darcy she surprises Georgiana "who listened with an astonishment bordering on alarm at her lively, sportive manner of talking to her

brother. He, who had always inspired in herself a respect, which almost overcame her affection, she now saw the object of open pleasantry.” Soon she receives liberal education from Elizabeth that “a woman may take liberties with her husband” (367). This new idea of relationship based on comradeship is Elizabeth’s power: an achievement not easily attained. She has to counter the opposition of the society to retain it.

We observe that Elizabeth is not daunted by Darcy when she feels challenged. She “dares” him for “the intellectual woman will try all the more zealously because she fears failure” (Beauvoir.719), and hence “she wants to take her revenge by playing the game with masculine weapons. She talks instead of listening; she displays subtle thoughts and strange emotions; she contradicts the man instead of agreeing with him; she tries to get the best of him” (Beauvoir.719). The moment she understands Darcy’s letter and his intentions she starts changing her attitude. She has been accepted as a confidante and a companion and that is what makes her change her attitude and a negation of fear that resides in the hearts of women. It is born out of a realization of being accepted as a rational being that is capable of understanding. It depends on both men and women to become a little modest and generous so as to defeat all ideas of victory and defeat and that will result in making the act of love a free exchange. Moi believes that “we must aim for a society in which we have ceased to categorize logic, conceptualization and rationality as ‘masculine’, not for one from which these virtues have been expelled altogether as ‘unfeminine’ ” (159).⁸

When Elizabeth enters the world outside Hertfordshire she becomes consciousness of surface reality in people and objects around her. Slowly and gradually, her consciousness matures as she sees more of the world, i.e., Rosings and Pemberley and interacts with people there. It is there that she enters spheres so far unknown to her; she is able to experience a reality

that exists elsewhere. Her perceptions go through a change, and she is able to understand Darcy better and finds Georgiana's behavior, which Wickham calls proud, to be nothing but confusion arising due to extreme shyness. Georgiana needs to learn an adequate language through encouragement to express her feelings and in the end this objective is achieved through Elizabeth.

The power dynamics of *P & P* seems to be made for men; the reason is that it is their world; they make their own laws. It is for their convenience that activities are planned and it is for their good that marriages are arranged. They are the shareholders of the larger part of the property and inheritance. The females are given a fixed share that is five times less than that of the male as Bingley's wealth amounts to about one hundred thousand pounds whereas his sisters are to get twenty thousand a piece. Balls and other social activities are planned when there are enough gentlemen to dance and so females have to literally beg for entertainment.

The power politics of the sexes continue to be played with much intensity and force in order to subdue the other. We see in *P & P* that the conquerors not only subjugate but also subtly exploit the conquered for their own ends as is the case with Mrs. Bennet as well as Charlotte Lucas. The serene world of *P & P* is hence, a very subtle struggle of power between men and women of society. The modern readers who have a new notion of female independence do not understand the character's obsession with marriage, because, now the concept of marriage has changed⁹ while in the world that Miss Austen depicts it is the "only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want" (117). Success through power politics can be seen around us day in and day out in different walks of life. The desire to win by subjugating the

other, results in devastation if the motive is solely to get hold of the other. However, Elizabeth refuses to comply with such ideas of female suppression.

When Elizabeth tries to voice her opinion she is considered “insolent”, as Jane Eyre in the novel *Jane Eyre* is sanctioned as “wicked, unprincipled girl” (Bronte 84). Centuries of submission has hushed women from having a voice at all. Their individuation is a revolt against these restrictions. As long as a woman gives total submission and pleases her masters with unabated dedication she is tolerated. Jane Bingley is considered a “sweet girl” (14) even by the snobbish Miss Bingley for she is humble and tries to please others without criticizing. She lacks the ability to argue and hence is seen defending even the wicked. According to the norms of her society, her weaknesses are her social attributes.¹⁰ To the modern reader Elizabeth’s defiance of tradition is her strength.

Most of the characters in P & P seem to be concerned with future prospects and every action is planned for the achievement of material gains. The education which would improve the intellect of women is looked at with suspicion for they fear that it will give women power that would make them mistresses of their desires. Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan’s *The Rivals* speaks of such apprehensions in the following words.

Observe me, Sir Anthony. -- I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance -- I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning -- neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments; -- But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice (22).

Sir Anthony seems to hold the same opinions when he says “it is not to be wonder'd at, Ma'am—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read.—Had I a thousand

daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black-art [black magic] as their alphabet” (22)! Notions like these about female education limited the intellectual powers of women especially of those who thought that all a woman needs is to be superficially accomplished. Elizabeth has the ability to think and this makes her give her opinions decisively which shocks Darcy as well as his aunt, as well as the Bingley sisters. Elizabeth, with her modern ideas, manages to blend among the people around her without looking out of place because “Austen integrates her thinking heroines into society as it is” (Kirkham 168).

Female education is blamed for making a woman desire the sort of freedom reserved for men and so they are discouraged to read independently. Lady Catherine de Bough lays great stress on females being chaperoned which brings us to question why there is so much stress on being chaperoned. Perhaps, it is to isolate and guard them from new emerging ideas of female freedom by keeping them at home, among restricted society and limited their knowledge. Instead of being allowed to think for themselves, they are programmed to think and behave in a certain manner about certain things, i.e., tiring education of female accomplishments, and not to be bothered about higher intellectual pursuits. Their intellectual sphere is extremely limited and their thinking ability chained. Their list of accomplishments does not include mental improvement. Miss De bough and Georgiana are two women belonging to the upper middleclass who are financially sound but they lack any desire to become independent. The reason is clear. They are not encouraged to think for themselves. Their fates are decided by their peers and patrons. Georgiana we are led to believe will improve through Elizabeth’s guidance but a very bleak fate awaits Miss de Bourgh because of her perpetual isolation.

Men do not realize that with female education, liberation and consciousness of women about their identity, men would not only find wives but companions.¹¹ The more Darcy is

attracted towards Elizabeth the less solace he finds in the company of other women; he feels irritated by his aunt as well as Miss Bingley. It is Elizabeth's intellect that impresses him for she manages to survive with dignity and state her opinions "frankly and openly" (347) before formidable characters like Catherine de Bourgh.¹² Being able to read and write enhances her literary tastes and sharpens her wit; she emerges a new woman, conscious of her womanhood and her identity. While Lady Catherine's own daughter, who is always chaperoned, is so shy that she cannot manage to carry on conversation. Spencer considers the female protagonists of Austen's novels as "the liveliest heroines to be reformed" (169), not only to gain an identity but also become instrumental in reforming others around them. Freeing herself of false interpretations Elizabeth advises her father to act responsibly. The same happens with Darcy's sister whose shyness is mistaken "as being exceedingly proud" and Elizabeth in her first meeting "found it difficult to obtain even a word from her beyond a monosyllable" (243).

The independence of the females in Meryton society offers a stark contrast to those at Pemberley, Rosings or even London where the movements of the ladies is restricted. Women there reveal lacking power and hence confidence. Georgiana waits for her brother to buy gifts for her rather than being independent in her choices. She is shy because she does experience interaction with different types of people. She lives almost the life of a nun, well protected and well chaperoned. Elizabeth, with her developed understanding, sees through her clumsiness and pities them.

In Elizabeth we meet an educated, revolutionized character who denies complying to the traditional notion of relating passivity with women and aggression with men, limited understanding with women and intellectual elevation with men. She can be aggressive like a man; we see her when she refuses to succumb before Darcy's wishes. She knows about her

‘will’ for the first time, because she feels that she has been insulted by Darcy when he degrades her family. She uses her individuality with confidence, and Darcy has to finally accept “By you, I was properly humbled” (349). Her ‘indifference to decorum’ help her prove her identity as she refuses to comply with the ‘established mode to express a sense of obligation’ (179). The second time we see her in an aggressive mood is again due to the degradation that she suffers from Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Elizabeth will not let people demean her ‘self’. She has become conscious of her own individuality which helps her see the reality of the others. She finds the great lady a pathetic figure not worth listening to. Her pronouncement of “so far we are equal” (336) shows her democratic spirit and her resolve to act in that manner, which will, in my opinion, constitute my happiness” (338) shows her confidence in herself.

Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and Emma’s rejection in *Emma* of their suitors show not only consciousness but also a will. Emma does not succumb to Frank’s charms, Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* rejects John Thorpe, Anne Eliot refuses Charles Musgrove in *Persuasion* and Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* takes her time to decide about her future husband. The “freedom given to women in choosing a husband...led to an emotional and sexual awakening in women, a sense of her power and consequence” (Brown 306). We observe that in *P & P* the male/female relationship passes over mere sexual union and emerges as a comradeship of two human beings.

The three leading females, Elizabeth, Jane and Charlotte Lucas in *P & P*, are full of life being realistic in their approach. So much so that “these young women are brought so attractively to life that every well constituted man regards himself as their only fit mate” (Ward 138) while Sparks argues that “in many ways they are not encouraged to grow up” (113-14). In a recent study of power politics of the sexes Kate Millet gives the reason for the lack of

confidence in women, and blames the social system that resists female empowerment. Gilbert and Gulbar, on the other hand, believe that marriage for them was impressed to be the only form of “self expression” (127).

Yet, even after two centuries, in some cultures women still hesitate and wonder at the audacity of the western women. Faith and perseverance are the only tools that can win the acknowledgement of their capabilities and this we notice in the character of Elizabeth. Millet believes, like Miss Austen that both sexes have powerful forces of different natures sustained in them. These forces should be allowed to flower and compliment rather than suppressed in one and over exposed in the other. Because men like Bingley, Darcy, Wickham are not allowed to witness or even discover the latent qualities of women so they harbor a very limited or poor opinion of females of their society; the women around them lack initiative and independence. Luckily, Darcy develops a sense of being able to glimpse an independent soul in a woman of a lower middle class. He is entranced and charmed and at the same time terrified “She attracted him more than he liked” (55).

Elizabeth is not conscious of the power of her beauty. Sir Lucas tries to persuade Darcy to dance with Elizabeth by wondering how he could refuse when “so much beauty is before you” (23), but she recoils by refusing the offer and making Darcy revise his opinion of her. Throughout the novel Austen does not dwell on her physical charm and she never falls a prey to the then popular “beauty myth”¹³, which overshadows female capabilities under the guise of female accomplishments. This idea of “staged female identity” (Backscheider 172) is a harmful product of the beauty myth. We observe this idea in *P & P*, though stated lightly between the conversation of Elizabeth and Jane. The latter as usual gives explanation of Bingley’s behaviour and defends him on the ground saying, “It is very often nothing but our own vanity that deceives

us. Women fancy admiration means more than it does.” To this Elizabeth with higher understanding realizes that “men take care that they should” (129).

Elizabeth, on the other hand has a different idea of admiration and beauty and she retains it to the very end. For her it is the beautiful mind that has every advantage over the physical beauty. She is conscious of her beautiful ‘self’ and so she does not bother to appear beautiful rather she basks in the glory of feeling beautiful. That is her main source of power over the others. Like the women of the Twenty-first century, she seems to believe “we must see that it does not matter in the least what women look like as long as we feel beautiful” (Wolf 272). She is satisfied and comfortable with her ‘self’, which makes her potentially more capable than the others. Furthermore Elizabeth is least dress conscious though in that society great care was taken in outward appearances which revealed vanity and occupied most of their precious time which could have been used in a more rewarding way to increase their understanding.¹⁴ As opposed to Elizabeth we see the vain Mrs. Elton in *Emma* obsessed by dresses and vanity that harmed her character and though she might be possessing good qualities they are pushed in the background because of her desire to look beautiful and show off.

Darcy is a perfect match for Elizabeth when it comes to the definition of beauty. He may admire good looks but though “he had detected with a crucial eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form”, what attracts him is the “easy playfulness” of her “manners” (20). He enjoys listening to her conversation and later when she stays with him in the same house for few days, he realizes that he cannot escape her attractions. Throughout the novel, he tries to break away from the power that she has over him, only to realize that the more he struggles for a breakthrough the more entwined he becomes; this admiration is not skin deep. She enters his tumultuous emotions and that is why there is no escape. Even the humiliation of a

flat refusal does not change his desire for her, rather; he has to amend his own concepts.

Elizabeth's consciousness of her femininity is over brimming which is quite unusual in that society, yet her friends do not perceive it as it passes the normal understanding of her friends and family; she positively galvanize Darcy's interest.

When Darcy calls Elizabeth "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me", he is stating his preference without considering what effect they may have on the listener. Elizabeth, on the other hand, considers it "ridiculous" (9). The question is why she considers it ridiculous? The reason could be that she is not impressed by the Darcy that is there, sexually a weakling who is only conscious of his social position rather she becomes apprehensive.

The war is declared against traditional expectations and the challenge is accepted, but this time modern weapons of female reason and intelligence are used in place of worn out female delicacy. Interestingly the whole plan of action is set within thirty to thirty five lines and the reader has to go through more than three hundred pages to learn who will win. This time the war is unconventional. In *The Watsons* we come to learn about a contrasting view of marriage.¹⁵ Elizabeth has no appetite for such male dominance. Her power lies in complete confidence of her abilities to judge, analyze and retain her graces with confidence. Her powers come from within and that is why she is least bothered about looks though she knows the value of a beautiful face and figure. This is evident in her speech when she humours the unsure Jane after her first meeting with Bingley. She says, "he could not help seeing that you were about five times as pretty as any other woman in the room" (12). She knows that Bingley is a trapped figure. In contrast to this Darcy's attraction for Elizabeth does not depend on physical beauty alone for had this been so he would never have called her "tolerable". He is impressed by

Elizabeth's intellect which challenges his own intellectual powers—a sort of battle of ideas and ideals between the two. Giffen believes that

Darcy is attracted by something in Elizabeth's nature that is lacking in his own; and, because he is who he is 'that is, because everyone around him wants something from him' he probably finds her disinterest in him refreshing (94).¹⁶

Elizabeth is high spirited like Arabella of *The Female Quixote* who does not beg but commands the others.¹⁷ Arabella though outwardly a silly romantic girl, is strong enough to believe in herself and expects complete fidelity and an attachment unhampered by any social inhibitions. She, like Elizabeth, refuses to succumb to male domination and social pressures. She is proud of herself and her ideals as is Elizabeth who won't come to terms with Darcy till he owns her low connections. Her power makes him accept her identity so much so that he goes on to confide his private affairs and shares his grief with her. Entrusting his secret with her he is sure it will be well guarded. She refuses to succumb to tyranny as she herself proclaims that her courage rises when people try to intimidate her (164). Later she proves it when Lady Catherine tries to bully her by ordering her to refuse Darcy's proposal; she tartly answers that she is "resolved to act in the manner, which will, in my own opinion, constitute my happiness" (358).¹⁸

In order to see their true 'self' the females have to liberate or emancipate from the age long ideas of orthodoxy of feeling and mind set. Emancipation comes from the others being social in origin but liberation comes from within for it is something personal. Once they manage to sidetrack from the mainstream, and go through the process of self analyses leading to self-realization, they embark on a discovery of individuality; worthy of as much respect and honour as males of their society. Elizabeth manages to free herself from the snares of the hard and fast rules of propriety and decorum that chained female freedom and follows her own ideals. She has to rid herself of "undeveloped domestic ideology"¹⁹ to attain her recognition as an individual.

The misguided conceptions must be rectified through the force of a powerful personality challenging Darcy that if *he* is there; here is someone else too. Interestingly one cannot fail to realize that both Elizabeth and Darcy have a justified pride in themselves to some extent. Their egos match: both must make each other realize their weakness.

Darcy must learn Elizabeth's stance and look at the world from Elizabeth's point of view for only then will he be able to understand her. The first features in her person that captures his attention as a man is "a pair of fine eyes on the face of a pretty woman" (24). From then onwards he is forced to acknowledge her figure to be light, pleasing and finally her movements start attracting him and he is caught by their easy playfulness. Soon, it is succeeded by his "wish to know more of her" (20). Elizabeth too, senses his rising interest in her when she observes him "listening" to her "conversation". All of Darcy's physical faculties are involved and one by one, he is deprived of his earlier reservations. His own "eyes" and "ears" are at war with his reasoning faculty that keeps on threatening him of dire consequences—love. Elizabeth's plan of revenge is quickly planned for she cannot forget herself being called "tolerable" so bracing herself to meet the enemy she decides "if I do not begin to being impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him" (20). She knows that if she shows any weakness she will be treated like other females of her society, while she intends to appear different by "express[ing]" herself "uncommonly well" (21) on different topics.

Women are seen desperate trying to come up to the expectations of men and so most of them try to fulfill these demands whether they like it or not; hence Miss Bingley is seen trying her best to secure Darcy's attentions. At one instance, when he talks of female readership, she even picks up a book for Darcy's sake but fails to stick to it because not being temperamentally

tuned to reading she fails to carry on the pretension for long. The reader is led to pity her.

Women during those times were generally not encouraged to read much.

Elizabeth is a very intelligent and rational person. She particularly has an eye for the imbeciles and the intriguers. She gauges Collins' shallowness by only hearing Collins letter read out loud. She has the capacity to see through the scheme of the Bingley sisters to separate Jane from their brother. She knows Wickham is not the kind of a person with whom she can spend her life; he is not her type. This is why she has no hard feelings about Miss King dating and courting Wickham. But when it comes to Darcy, Elizabeth seems to misread and misjudge most of the things she can read so very well in others. She thinks of him as one of the many around her. And when she learns what type of a person he actually is, she is more perceptive and receptive. Her demeanor and behaviour single her out and she stands taller than all the female characters in the novel. She is different than the rest of the crowd.

When Elizabeth meets Lady Catherine she quickly sees through her vanity and reacts by being on guard while others are awestruck by her apparent grandeur. When Lady Catherine confronts Elizabeth she retaliates by using all her efforts to argue back quite rationally, leaving Lady Catherine wonder at her spirit for counter arguments.

We realize that in Austen's society freedom and consciousness of one's rights is not to be tolerated in young women. When Lady Catherine pronounces that "My character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness" (333), it is considered justified because she is rich and influential but when Elizabeth speaks out her mind she is considered "Obstinate, headstrong girl!" Her heroines are different because they are vocal and rational and they believe in themselves. Miss Watson's remark in the half finished novel of Jane Austen *The Watsons* portrays the feelings of such independent women when though poor she has the audacity to

remark about a lord “There is a ridiculousness about him that entertains me – but his company gives me no other pleasure”(108).²⁰ The interesting result is that we see her being sought by the same aristocrat who is considered highly eligible by the others. Other women, in the same situation cannot even dare, to attract him let alone reject. In *P & P*, too, we notice that Bingley is much sought after for his social superiority yet Darcy is ignored by Elizabeth though socially he is more superior to Bingley.

Elizabeth is conscious of Darcy’s position in the society, but not much conscious of the power of her beauty. Her indifference to a fashionable attire and ornaments as she appears in Netherfield Park makes Darcy revise his opinion of her. Throughout the novel Austen does not dwell on her physical charm and she never falls a prey to the then popular “beauty myth”²¹ as Naomi Wolf calls it; which overshadows female capabilities under the guise of female accomplishments. This idea of “staged female identity” (Backscheider.172) is a harmful product of the beauty myth. We observe this idea in *P & P*, though stated lightly between the conversation of Elizabeth and Jane. Jane is as usual trying to give explanation of Bingley’s behaviour and defends him on the ground that; “It is very often nothing but our own vanity that deceives us. Women fancy admiration means more than it does.” To this Elizabeth with higher understanding realizes that “men take care that they should” (129).

Elizabeth, we come to learn, has a different idea of admiration and beauty and she retains it to the very end. For her it is the beautiful mind that has every advantage over the physical beauty. She is conscious of her beautiful ‘self’ and so she does not bother to appear beautiful rather she basks in the glory of feeling beautiful. That is her main source of power over the others. Like the women of twenty first century, she seems to believe “we must see that it does not matter in the least what women look like as long as we feel beautiful” (Wolf.272). She is

satisfied and comfortable with her 'self', which makes her potentially more capable than the others. Furthermore because Elizabeth is least dress conscious, it saves her enough time to meditate on serious matters though in that society great care was taken in outward appearances which revealed vanity and occupied most of the precious time which could have been used in a more rewarding way to increase understanding.²² As opposed to Elizabeth we see the vain Mrs. Elton in *Emma* obsessed by dresses and vanity that harms her character and though she might be possessing good qualities they are pushed in the background because of her desire to look beautiful. Her occupation with the exhibition of her wealth and connections makes her a very undesirable companion to the others so much so that even the meek Jane Fairfax would rather avoid her company on the pretext of a headache.

Darcy, on the other hand is a perfect match for Elizabeth when it comes to the definition of beauty. He may admire good looks but though "he had detected with a crucial eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form", yet what attracts him is the "easy playfulness" of her "manners" (20). He enjoys listening to her conversation and later when she stays with him in the same house for few days, he realizes that he cannot escape her attractions. Throughout the novel, he tries to break away from the power that she has over him, only to realize that the more he struggles for a breakthrough the more entangled he becomes; this admiration is not skin deep. She enters his tumultuous emotions and that is why there is no escape. Even the humiliation of a flat refusal does not change his desire for her, rather; he has to amend his own concepts. Elizabeth's consciousness of her femininity is over brimming which is quite unusual in that society, yet her friends do not perceive it as it passes the normal understanding of her friends and family; she positively galvanize Darcy's interest.

In *P & P* the idea of beauty surfaces more as a state of mind; it is a conscious awareness of one's power over the others. It is through this quality that Charlotte manages to secure her future comfort. She is a victim of the expectations of her society and hence enslaved by the norms. Living a parasitic life, on the whims of society, not only financially, but emotionally and socially her chances of happiness seem to be meager. As her existence is 'parasitic'²³, she must think of becoming independent to live like an individual. It is this desire which makes her compromise with the idea of marrying Collins. Women's "marginal life frequently renders them conservative, for like all persons in their situation...they identify their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them" (Woolf. 38). They look forward to male approval. Elizabeth enters this social milieu with impudence and uncereemoniously. She enters a sphere of experiment so far unknown to the females of that era; but on her own term which that society never endorsed. Sure of herself she becomes a contrast even to some males in the novel.

While we see Darcy wrapped up in the celebration of reason and intellect, Elizabeth too prides herself in her understanding of the world and intelligent observations which wins her a male's approval, namely that of her father. Her womanhood reveals the picture of a woman that is different from the existing ideals. She never comes into conflict with her neighbourhood and they seem to understand her. One is led to question, why is it that she comes into conflict with people she has never met? The reason perhaps is because she presents a challenge to their understanding; they seem to have never met anyone like her. With Bingley it is different for his general goodness of heart does not allow him to observe people critically and hence his views are different from the rest of the outsiders. Wickham, too, blends easily with the crowd because he is there to exploit. Being financially weak he is busy looking for a market to sell his bachelorhood. On the other hand, Lady Catherine, who has deliberately come with a prejudiced

mind, finds faults even in the Bennet house and the garden, let alone in Elizabeth's person. She fails to see any affinity with the people of Meryton and rudely leaves the vicinity of Hertfordshire.

Darcy changes from a snob to a helpful person because he is ready to change while the rest remain as ignorant of the others as they are in the beginning, e.g. Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He liberates himself from false pretensions and is able to view the whole issue in an objective manner. "Freedom, in short, gives human beings, whether in isolation or in concert, the capacity to start over, to form new habits, even to establish spontaneously a new constitution of the soul or of society" (Price. 96).

Darcy's letter of explanation reveals his own step by step awareness of the others. From general reasoning he slowly moves on towards the particular and then imperceptibly towards a personal revelation. The letter shows that in trying to clarify things to her he is clarifying them to himself too. The letter reveals a bond between them which they fail to see. Without being conscious of her power over him he asks for promises of secrecy knowing that his wish will be granted. The first milestone of trust and understanding is achieved. Indirectly he desires to be her friend.

Elizabeth, Jane and even Charlotte are desired by men for different reasons outwardly, for a long-term relationship. Elizabeth for her intellect and confidence, Jane for her beauty and graces while Charlotte for being agreeable.²⁴

When one considers the male counterparts of these three women one agrees that Darcy's stance is based on "patriarchal basis of this society[that] places men in positions both of power and responsibility and leaves women in many ways dependent on men for their welfare, that society allows and even countenances betrays of the women it should protect" (Shaffer.133). He

is used to dictating others and denounces all those whom he considers beneath his social 'I'. Society and the environment have wrongly invested undue power in him by being awed by his wealth. Surprised at being caught by the power of expression that her eyes hold; he tries his best to appear indifferent while unconsciously the more he struggles the more he is entrapped by her compelling personality. His eyes follow her and she becomes conscious. He tries to escape from the power of her company by putting a self imposed physical displacement, making Bingley an excuse and leaving Hertfordshire, only to realize that "Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself" (181).

His proposal at Rosings is extremely painful to him. His intellect and emotions are at war and this can be seen in the restlessness that precedes the proposal. His personal integrity is at stake. The humiliation completes with Elizabeth's blunt refusal for she is seeking revenge upon him. Strangely enough, rather than rejoice she suffers. The argument leaves her bitter, angry and depressed though she wants to feel exalted at her success.²⁵ The moment he is gone she starts analyzing the situation only to learn how wrong she has been. The moment triggers a movement of self-realization. The conflict finally culminates to a synthesis.²⁶

Darcy is disgusted at his apparent defeat and violently expresses by saying that he proposed "against" his "will", "reason", and his "character" which makes Elizabeth retort in the same tone "I have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly"(179). Words like these shake the very existence of Mr. Darcy and for a moment he is spellbound at her audacity. She further arouses his anger by stating that she might have responded in a milder manner "had you behaved in a more gentlemanlike manner" (182).

The bitter remarks of the lady instead of discouraging the gentleman makes him ponder and after a lot of suffering of self-knowledge. The letter of explanation is the first sign of retreat

from Darcy's side for he fears a loss which he realizes he cannot bear and Elizabeth simultaneously breaks down and "cried for half an hour"(183). Her egotistical intransigence goes through a change and she learns that what should have been an ideal relationship for her is hampered by contending forces of prejudice. This issue makes the reader realize that the age long ideas about female subjugation that causes Elizabeth's prejudice need to go through a change and acceptance of individuals be made on basis of selfless humility and truth.

Darcy has little regard for pretentious modesty which Elizabeth also feels, does harm to female sensibility and graces. She seems to believe that by appearing weak under the sham pretence of modesty women are led to conceal their true feelings; this also gives men a chance to overpower them. According to her "My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me"(164) in the words of Davidson "false modesty forces women to deceive others as well as themselves, bestowing power on women only within a system of tyranny and dependence" (89). While *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, targets the conduct book model of female chastity as a "system of dissimulation" that obliges women to sacrifice the substance of morality for the show of it (Woolstonecraft.168).²⁷

P & P particularly highlight ideas of desirability in the life partner. In this power politics male have the upper hand and females are on the receiving end. The desire for a partner hence originates in males. Bingley desires a wife who is beautiful and accomplished, with sweet manners and Miss Bennet fits his description to the utmost. Some believe that one

might well fall in love for the sole reason that the beloved is beautiful but after several years find that beauty is among the lesser charms of the beloved. (Or, more complex, that the very conception of what is beautiful about the beloved has radically changed.) (Soloman.5)²⁸

Bingley is an easy going person easily led by others; he does not ask for much and hence his choice is easily made which he does not fail to show by preferring Jane's company and dancing particularly with her. The attention that he pays her is too explicit for the people to doubt his intentions. He is the first bachelor in the marriage market. He is equipped with all the tools of power that give him an edge over the others. Firstly he is a man: then a bachelor who is independent and wealthy. This is enough to strike the Meryton Assembly into subordination. Crowning all these qualities, he turns out to be "good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy unaffected manners" (7). To this demigod, the society is ready to sacrifice their daughters and though all want to secure him yet they agree to present him the most beautiful flower in the form of Jane Bennet. Even Jane does not mind rather she looks forward to meeting him again revealing a romantic streak; happy to attract his attention and is "very much flattered by his asking [me] to dance a second time"(11). While Elizabeth, becomes conscious of the real world around her by being practical. She has to explore different layers of reality as they exist around her for "[r]eality resides not so much in the objective world as in the individual's perception" (Madsen. 89).

With the other characters, it is different; Jane's tragedy is that she is not conscious of her own self and sees herself as a projection of social desires inculcated by her social environment. Bingley, for her, has "perfect good breeding" (11). She does not see nor desires to explore his inner qualities and so we see her impressed by an agreeable specter than an individual. Nonetheless, he manages to impress the assembly by being friendly towards them; a trait Darcy particularly lacks. He manages to win hearts through his simple dealings. Jane knows that Bingley loves her yet she does not have the sense to fasten his desires. Charlotte's comments are very apt when she observes that Jane's reticence and reserve will bring disappointment because

There is so much of gratitude or vanity in almost every attachment, that it is not safe to leave any to itself. We can all *begin* freely – a slight preference is natural enough, but there are very few of us who have heart enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show *more* affection than she feels. Bingley likes your sister undoubtedly; but he may never do more than like her, if she does not help him on (18).

One wonders why Bingley who is desperately in love with Jane never words his feelings. He has all the authority that society gives to a male. He is independent yet he waits for Darcy's approval. He does not rely on his own discretion which Darcy calls his "diffidence" (351). Darcy turns out to be his decision maker, and considers his hesitation as the product of unaffected modesty which was, and is still considered, to be a 'female' characteristic. Yet, Bingley is considered a prize with all his weaknesses, which the common men and women fail to, see in him. Though others might be in doubt about his feelings for Jane; Elizabeth has sense enough to see through him as she communicates her sister "I think you are in very great danger of making him as much in love with you as ever" (319). Later she observes that "Mr. Bingley had been a most delightful friend; so easily guided that his worth was invaluable" (351).

The other eligible young men in the novel are Wickham and Colonel Fitzwilliam but their preferences are thwarted by their desire of heiresses, rather than free minded or accomplished young women. This makes one realize the freedom with which men express their desires while free choice for women is curtailed by the society; she becomes a pathetic figure. The qualities that most men desire in women are totally different from what women secretly desire in men; it changes from person to person. Jane and her father wonder if Elizabeth is attached to Darcy to the extent of marrying him "are you certain that you can be happy with him" (353) ? For Mr. Bennet, he is a "proud" and "unpleasant" (356) man, but for Elizabeth he is entirely what she

ever wants in a husband. His practical approach perhaps impresses her, but not before the misunderstanding is cleared.

Darcy on the other hand misunderstands Jane's grace and natural shyness, although the common acceptable practice is "usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour" (102). Bingley has never been vocal in his love so Darcy's criticism of Jane's lack of exhibition is nothing but male prejudice. If he does not want Bingley to demean himself by getting a refusal then why does he expect Jane to leave modesty and grace by an open declaration? She cannot do so even if she wants to because women are not taught to behave in an open manner and state their intentions openly; they are to observe propriety and decorum which forbids them to be open in showing their feelings. Interestingly, when Elizabeth does this, by refusing Collins, she is censured by her mother. In contrast to other characters Collins' seems to be quite naïve in this matter. His criterion of a desirable woman is as dictated to him by Lady Catherine, he does not have any particular idea so he quickly changes from Jane to Elizabeth and when refused by her; he proposes Charlotte Lucas.

With Jane it is rather a superficial beginning. Her grace and beauty attracts Bingley who leaves her when doubt is planted in his heart; regarding her feelings and character. She tries to meet him in London after he deserts her because she knows that once she meets him in person he won't be able to resist her power but through careful manipulation she is deprived of this opportunity. It is when she weakens in her resolve that the rift between the two widens; but the power lingers imperceptibly. Their confusion is resolved when Bingley finally comes to meet her.

Darcy's views of the other sex are different from Bingley and other male characters. Marsh believes that when Darcy perceives women alluring men to matrimony employing mean arts he considers it sly behaviour and calls "cunning despicable" (36). He is not referring to females recommending themselves to the opposite sex, as proclaimed by Miss Bingley; according to him it is generally a "mean art" (36) and a trick which Elizabeth particularly lacks. Elizabeth is devoid of any such attempt and even wonders why Mr. Darcy takes interest in her instead of considering it a great compliment. Marsh further states that Darcy's interest in Elizabeth is born out of a desire "for some 'masculine' qualities in his ideal woman" (134) and Elizabeth's defiance to certain social norms are not considered feminine in that society. Darcy is not only looking for a wife but a companion with whom to share more than a stereotypical relationship and Elizabeth meets his need of "greater reality and equality than conventional masculine and feminine roles could provide for him" (Marsh. 136).

Darcy analyzes and seriously assesses Elizabeth's attitude and her confidence when he compares her with the women he knows. With a preconceived notion of power with money and masculinity, he is perplexed. He goes through a change because he is nevertheless ready to learn and understand. Darcy's struggle and suffering mirrors the pain that one has to go through when one has to change one's mind and heart.²⁹ Stooping to an explanation, trusting her with his secrets, he seems to accept her superiority of character and beliefs and that is what softens Elizabeth. She is no longer hard on him; rather she manages to see him in a clear light because the vagueness that engulfs male/female relationship begins to clarify. The words of the letter have the same effect on her too. The next time they meet the struggle for power has abated and so have the politics, a new era of enlightenment begins. Unconsciously they are becoming conscious extensions of each other.

Austen's treatment of the marriage plot is skillfully handled and she does not seem to propose any suggestion openly in this regard. She presents her belief in "the system of marriage and courtship" not only as a source of domestic felicity but "as a way to affirm the vigorous reality of female sexuality" (Heydt-Stevenson.309). What the society called female accomplishments are to Austen only superfluous narrative while she believes that "We are handsome, my dear Charlotte, very handsome and the greatest of our Perfections is, that we are entirely insensible of them ourselves" (Austen, *Lesley Castle*, 331).

The same thoughts echo even after a century later in the work of modern critics who warn females to recognize and understand their attributes inside them so as to be able to "activate their powers whenever you need them". (Zweck. Smith. 16)³⁰ This will become their guide to help them when required. Mooneyham believes marriage for Austen is not a tale that ends with "living happily ever after" rather it is a "culmination of educative process" which teaches the reader that one can "achieve happiness by surpassing self love and achieving wholeness of being"(Mooneyham.27). He further states that *P & P* "presents a balance of power not only between two characters but between two conflicting modes of judgment, and, by extension between two conflicting systems of language which both reflect and shape these judgments" (45). To this I would like to add that the novel ends up in bringing harmony between the representatives of the two sexes enabling them to accept the other as a human who is not perfect. For Mooneyham thus the "give and take is charged with sexual energy" (63) while I would like to add that their coming to term largely depends on Elizabeth's intellectual energy too.³¹ Her marriage with Darcy is a proof of her intellectual power.

Married women in *P & P* are more powerful than unmarried ones; for the freedom with which they exert themselves in the sphere of their houses is not challenged by others. We see

this when Elizabeth goes to Rosings, where she sees how skillfully Charlotte manages to endure the company of Mr. Collins. Indirectly Charlotte does try to convey a message to Elizabeth not to refuse every eligible offer. Being worldly-wise, she knows that though beautiful, Elizabeth is by no means the most desirable woman for the men of that society. In most of the cases beautiful girls need more than beauty to marry rich. The case of widows is hence more severe, for they not only lose their husbands but have to survive and face the miseries of life. Their struggle is more intense for they resort to different schemes and plans with little, or in some cases, no regard for morality to acquire happiness.³²

Keeping within the required norms and feeding the vanity of men, women pretend to be slaves. In reality, women are not really serving the whims of their life partners, for who would resort to tricks and foolish endeavours to get entrapped in marriage, according to Clarissa³³ is a trap? Once wedded, they become mistresses of the houses which turns out to be their domain and hence even an intelligent man like Mr. Bennet has no choice but to be cornered in his library. In contrast to Mr. Bennet, Mr. Gardiner lives a comfortable life for the power to rule the house is equally shared.

Bingley's love for Jane is based on physical and that is why he leaves her without explanation. Later he comes back realizing the strength of his feelings and proposes to her. If all this happens to the present-day woman, the first question that comes to our mind is: will she be flattered? Certainly not, rather she would consider the offer with a lot of suspicion for she has come to know the gender exploitation of the past eras and awareness of female rights in the contemporary times. Bingley is awed by Jane's physical beauty. For him she is "the most beautiful creature" and "he could not conceive an angel more beautiful". For Bingley she is a 'creature' and an 'angel' while for her "he is just what a young man ought to be" and that is

“sensible, good humoured, lively” (9, 14, 11). He appreciates her physical beauty while she appreciates the abstract attributes of his personality.

Bingley leaves Jane without a word when told that “though she received his attentions with pleasure, she did not invite them by any participation of sentiment” (186). According to modern concepts, he literally dumps her which is a great insult to a modern woman yet nobody blames Bingley. It is so because the accepted reaction of a female was to show gratitude for being considered desirable. Jane accepts him without a second thought and excitedly declares that Bingley’s proposal is “by far too much! I do not deserve it. Oh! Why is not every body as happy!” (327) we see a similar drama of sexual politics around us though so far in time; women are still in the same situation. However, in the West things have gone to a drastic change. The modern idea of vertical and horizontal relationships, exposes the desires of men and women, as well as makes them realize the level of their own involvement in the other when it comes to marriage.

In P & P Elizabeth/Darcy relationship proves more dynamic and wholesome because both revere each other’s capabilities. They are both conscious of their own capabilities and their spheres of existence that is why they manage to avoid any clash as reported by the author in the end. Before making a contract to live together as husband and wife they have to purge themselves of those wrong notions that may ruin their happiness. Here they have the chance to talk freely when each unburdens the ‘self’ by acknowledging their mistakes. This is enough proof to what Moers says that Austen’s concern is not marriage but “marriageship” (71). Their union is a combination of socio-sexual contract.³⁴

In P & P, men and women are interacting at different levels, which help them change their perspectives of power politics. They are seen continuously trying to bridge the gap between

themselves; between different classes; social institutions and even different moral stances. It is only by remaining stagnant at a place that people become bound to local values and particular ethics. It is through movement that humans are able to broaden their horizon; hence the characters in *P & P* move from one place to the other, learn and become conscious of their lack. Those who try to improve their understanding achieve happiness.³⁵

Men and women need a strong relationship based on respect and understanding to come to a compromise and make a healthy union. Millet is determined that “unless we go to the very center of the sexual politics and its sick delirium of power and violence, all our efforts at liberation will only land us again in the same primordial stews” (22). Hence the Meryton neighbourhood does not see Elizabeth any different from Jane, Charlotte or the Long nieces. Nobody is conscious of Elizabeth’s dynamic personality. For them she is just a “desirable partner” (23). Her refusal of Collins earns her mother’s anger. Her father, who has gone through the suffering of an unequal match tries to be more cooperative but fails to understand her reason. That is why he cannot assess her real feelings towards Darcy and when Collins informs him of a probability of a match between Darcy and Elizabeth he laughs it off by considering it “delightfully absurd” (344).

Not only in *P & P* but in all Austen’s novels the misunderstandings between the protagonists are clarified, mistakes and errors confessed. With the weaknesses exposed the two ‘selves’ stand exposed before each other to see in the light of truth. Elizabeth believes in the “vital sensitive organ of self esteem” (Millet.14) and carries it well so that is why she manages to succeed in the end. The truth that both manage to see is the beauty of the soul. Interestingly Ms. Austen as well as Ms. Charlotte Bronte, her contemporary writer relies more on the beauty of the self than that of the outer form. In *Jane Eyre* the heroine is a common looking girl with

substance of character and soul and Austen's heroines too are not certainly the prettiest ones around. Their beauty has an intrinsic value so one has to believe in it to see it. Georgiana comes to meet Elizabeth she is charmed by her and no matter how cruel Miss Bingley may speak of Elizabeth's looks she does not change her opinion.

This depth of relations "miraculously transforms all social differences into gender differences and gender differences into qualities of mind" (Armstrong) and that is why both respect each other. "It was a union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her easy manners and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgment, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance" (293). These lines reveal the idea of the marriage contract that the female protagonists in *P & P* believe, and perhaps yearn for themselves and for women in general. They also remind one of Emily Dickenson's poems *The Contract*³⁶ where a woman's frail but loud voice is heard as she longs for a long term relationship based on mutual respect, trust and equal footing. All the female characters in *P & P* seem to be craving for such a contract inwardly but all are not lucky enough to secure the attentions of men who might admire the depth of their feelings. Even Bingley fails to fully appreciate the qualities of Jane till he is guided by Darcy in a discreet manner. Darcy wants to see the strength of his attachment too and that is why he takes him to visit the Bennet household. Elizabeth is sharp enough to see into the scheme that "all this must have taken place with the gentleman's concurrence" (326).

Elizabeth learns to respect Darcy when he regards her with due esteem "she could not be insensible to the compliment of such a man's affection" (179). Perhaps this is the reason that forces Elizabeth to read and later reread Darcy's letter. He enters the recesses of her mind and she finds temperamental similarities. It is the age long misunderstandings and a desire to

overpower the other that has so far spoiled that which otherwise can bring contentment and happiness. Their contention increases when both are in an attacking and winning mood. Interestingly, the moment one weakens the other unconsciously undergoes through the same emotions as happens with Darcy. Like Darcy we all must shed away our reservations and look at the world with a broader perspective for only then will we be able to tolerate the others and create harmony in the society.

Notes

¹ “It is the duty of every man, who has sufficient means, to maintain a wife. The life of unmarried women is a wretched one.” G. Gissing, *The Odd Women* (London: Virago), 1980, p. 93.

² The modern men and women would not understand the power politics of Charlotte and may pity her for choosing a lifetime of suffering by marrying Mr. Collins but she knows what she gains by relieving her family and the society from “apprehensions of Charlotte’s dying an old maid” (117). She wins a place in her society and that is for her the social power she desires.

³ For an interesting discussion see Johanna M. Smith’s *I am a Gentleman’s Daughter: A Marxist-Feminist Reading of Pride and Prejudice* pp.67-73 in Marcia McClintock Folsom (ed.) *Approaches to Teaching Austen’s Pride and Prejudice* (Mod. Lang. Assn. of Amer., 1993).

⁴ The terms appear in Warren. Leland E. *Of the Conversation of Women: The Female Quixote and the Dream of Perfection* Studies in Elizabethan- Century Culture Vol. 2 . American Society for 18th Century Studies, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982 pp. 367---380

⁵ Pamela Whalan relates “Once a girl married her property became her husband’s. It was almost impossible for a woman to get a divorce even if her husband beat her, misused her money, was constantly drunk, was unfaithful or neglectful. She could only sue for divorce if her husband brought his mistress to live in the marital home. That was why it was so necessary for marriage settlements to be drawn up. A Marriage Settlement was a legal document drawn up before the marriage took place guaranteeing that the bride would have a certain sum “settled” on her i.e. she was entitled to the interest from that money during her lifetime and that money could be willed to her children. A marriage settlement also clearly stated what she would be entitled to if she were widowed or what would happen to any money she brought into the marriage were she to predecease her husband. The amount of a girl’s marriage settlement was usually determined by how much money she brought into the marriage, i.e. her dowry or jointure. If the husband were very wealthy he might supplement this as Mrs Bennet expected Mr Darcy would do when she spoke of how much “pin money” Elizabeth would have (*Pride and Prejudice*, III, 17, p.300). If a girl eloped and was married without a marriage settlement any money that had been legally hers at the time of the marriage became the property of her husband without any safeguards on how he could use it. He could disappear the next day and the girl could be left penniless. Does this give you some idea of the enormity of what could have happened if George Wickham had successfully eloped with Georgiana Darcy? Can you see how important it was that Lydia Bennet should have money settled on her before the wedding took place? Elopement was not just a moral lapse but also a most imprudent step. A man who would talk a girl into eloping with him was not a gentleman according to the code of conduct of the time because by eloping he was ruining the girl’s reputation and, even more importantly, he was profiting financially by preying on her innocence and ignorance of the world. Notice that George Wickham is only interested in single girls with money. He is not so silly as to run off with a rich married woman. Apart from the fact that her money would be so tied up through the marriage settlements that he wouldn’t be able to get his hands on it easily, if a married woman ran off with a lover her husband could sue him. You see, legally a man’s wife was his property. If another man illegally used his property, i.e. his wife, she became “damaged goods” and the husband could take out a civil suit against the lover and could get quite a lot of money in damages based on rank and fortune, length of

marriage, whether the men had been friends etc. The husband could get as much as 10,000 pounds to sooth his wounded pride. These civil actions were between men only. An injured wife could not get such compensation if her husband ran away with his mistress.” Whalan. Pamela *Understanding the society in which Jane Austen sets Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen Society of Australia: Study Guide <http://www.jasa.net.au/study/indivsoc.htm> 12-2-0

⁶ The citation of Philogamus, *The Present State of Matrimony: or, The Real Causes of Conjugal Infidelity and Unhappy Marriages* (1739), p. 33 was found in Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818*. (West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2004). p 190 <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar> on 29.8.08.

⁷ Even now, in some societies, like our own in the East, we observe that women are in need of male protection.

⁸ The same spirit of independence is seen in more intense form in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. Jane is extremely conscious of her own self when she says to St John “I have a woman’s heart ;but not where you are concerned: for you I have only a comrade’s constancy; a fellow-soldier’s frankness, fidelity, fraternity ,if you like; a neophyte’s respect and submission to his hierophant: nothing more – don’t fear” (430). On his insistence that she still should marry him whether she loves him or not she says “I scorn your idea of love..... I scorn the counterfeit sentiment you offer: yes St. John, and I scorn you when you offer it” (430). Though uttered in highly emotional tone and “unguardedly” she nevertheless exposes her true ‘self’ because she feels insulted at the idea of offering herself for nothing.

⁹ In Jane Austen’s time “Marriage was, for all ranks, the means of transferring property, occupational status, personal contacts money tools, livestock, and women across generations and kin groups.” Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780*, p.151 The quoted lines appear on page Ruth. Perry, *Novel relations: The transformation of kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818*

¹⁰ Henry fielding in his novel gives a very exquisite description of Sophia, the only daughter of Mr. Western which is nothing but homage to her beautiful physic. What I want to point is that women were evaluated by their physical charms and the extreme deference they would give to their male counterparts if these high beings were considered as such. Fielding. Henry, *Tom Jones* (London: Penguin Books, 1749, 1985), p.155-56

¹¹ It seems, that that the female novelists in the eighteenth century, did a brave job by clarifying certain deliberately kept vague notions, regarding male/ female relationship, as presented by earlier male authors. Perhaps men feared, that it will question the male dominance over women and the resulting exploitation which will weaken their hold on women.

¹² Here one is reminded of Shakespeare’s Rosalind in *As You Like it* where she ‘Deprived of her real father and a surrogate one she must learn to look after herself and help others see their ‘real self’ she manages to educate Orlando as well as the lady who falls in love with her by mistake. Orlando’s physical strength protects him from wrestler and he assumes the role of protector provider for his old servant while it is Rosalind’s intellect that helps her save herself as well as Celia through disguise.’ p.102 Crosman. Robert, *World’s a Stage : Shakespeare and the Dramatic View of Life* (Bethesda, MD, USA: Academica Press, LLC, 2005). p 102 <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10171161&ppg=116>

¹³ For detail see Naomi Wolf, *Beauty Myth* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd. 1990)

¹⁴“Prominent among the commodities represented as inducing unmonitored consumption, social masquerade, and vanity were clothes. Like printed culture, they offered the opportunity to lift women out of their rank. Clothes have long carried moral associations, particularly for women, as emblems of deceit and display, sexuality and consumption.” p. 167 Backscheider, Paula R.(Editor). *Revising Women : Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement* (Baltimore, MD, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10021548>

¹⁵ Emma, in *The Watsons*, is also an accomplished girl without means but being brought-up in a different environment she fails to understand the motives of her sisters regarding marriage. She is at loss to understand why women are "To be so bent on marriage -- to pursue a man merely for the sake of a situation -- is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great evil, but to a woman of education and feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest. -- I would rather be a teacher in a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a man I did not like" (Austen. 81). Emma seems to be vocalizing Austen's personal idea of a long term relationship: marriage because considering her life, as reported by her brother Henry Austen we learn that Austen refused at two eligible proposals because she seems to think like Elizabeth "you could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so" (102).

¹⁶ One is here reminded of Jung's concept of anima and animus. Darcy and Elizabeth both need each other because both suffer from the same lack to some extent and hence fall short of wholesomeness. Darcy lacks anima while Elizabeth's problem is an inflated animus. Both complement each other for a wholesome personality. For more detail see Jung. C. J. *The Development of Personality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) p.198

¹⁷ Elizabeth is not like Richardsonian Pamela, who has very strong moral ideals regarding the chastity of women but not strong enough to defy her usurper openly. She keeps on requesting Mr. B. to have mercy on her and depends upon divine interventions for her safety.

¹⁸Arabella in *The Female Quixote* too, refuses to respond to or be controlled by authority but unlike Elizabeth she romanticizes characters of historical female characters that appear in "tales which picture heroines who are in control, both of themselves and of the men around them" (Craft.833). Unlike Arabella, Elizabeth is not at all romantic rather she considers it foolish to have an unguarded inclination. She is well aware of the consequences of such behavior and that is why she begs her father not to leave Lydia unattended for she knows that unguarded freedom will ruin her.

¹⁹ The term appears in an article *Nobody's Story: gender, Property, and the Rise of the Novel* by Catherine Gallagher in *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 3, Sept. 92

²⁰ The heroine of the half finished novel *The Watsons* is an independent minded lady who has been brought up in Genteel company but due to certain circumstances she has come back home to witness her sisters who are in blind pursuit of eligible matches revealing lack of grace. Her ideas shock them and they fail to understand her stance.

²¹ For detail see Naomi Wolf *Beauty Myth* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd. 1990)

²²“Prominent among the commodities represented as inducing unmonitored consumption, social masquerade, and vanity were clothes. Like printed culture, they offered the opportunity to

lift women out of their rank. Clothes have long carried moral associations, particularly for women, as emblems of deceit and display, sexuality and consumption.” p. 167 Backscheider, Paula R.(Editor). *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement* (Baltimore, MD, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar>

²³ Kate Millet talks of this state of women in detail in her book *Sexual Politics* (London : Virago Press 1977)

²⁴ Intrinsically, all these three women have something in common and that is, their moral supremacy on all others around them especially their male counterparts. The men who desire their company are entrapped by what they see in their character. Their power is revealed in different forms. Elizabeth speaks it up in words “You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say” (103) Jane exhibits it through silence and Charlotte through her knowledge of men.

²⁵ One is here reminded of Hegelian concept of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The moment the conflict reaches its peak it starts declining towards a resolution till finally both come to learn their weakness and mistakes. Both go through a change.

²⁶ For detail about Hegelian concept of achieving a synthesis see Appelbaum. Richard P., *Theories of Social Change* (Chicago: Markham Publishing 1970)

²⁷ Wollstonecraft argues that women have been transformed by the pressures of chivalry, gallantry and modesty into disgusting hypocrites. Gallantry is a word for the system of manners that men use to dominate women from the outside in, and modesty denominates the way that women are disciplined from the inside out, although it may be misleading to emphasize the exteriority of gallantry and the interiority of modesty: the former is an ideology that women also internalize, while the latter can be seen as a system of overt domination.’(77)

²⁸ Robert C. Solomon, *Reasons for Love*, Journal for the theory of Social Behavior , Volume 32, Issue 1, March 2002,

Doi: 10.1111/1468-5914.00173 6-6-2009

²⁹ Reading about Darcy’s inner struggle I was reminded of Shakespeare’s Hamlet and his suffering when he has to go through the same ordeal of making a decision which he disliked.

³⁰ These critics further state that the feminine qualities that women have been made to neglect or ignore are ‘rational, linear, verbal thinking’ using their intelligence for they were convinced that such qualities were unfeminine(168) Dina Von Zweck. Jaye Smith *Venus unbound: A guide to actualizing the power of being female* (New York: Simon and Shuster 1989)

³¹ We see that people fail to understand the conversation between Elizabeth and Darcy when they are exchanging ideas. I believe that they could have come to an earlier understanding had they not been interrupted first by Miss Bingley and later by Lady Catherine de Bourgh. I believe that caught in the dilemma of male dominance Austen’s heroines have to surmount the stereotype ideal of a submissive female and present a more modern and firm rooted one or otherwise suffer. Elizabeth must achieve a dignified status and avoid all degradation and mean arts so as to avoid the fates of Lydia Bennet in *P & P*, Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park* and Isabella Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*.

³² Susan Vernon, in the novel *Lady Susan*, and Mrs. Norris, in *Mansfield Park* become more energetic to preserve their power because without a husband their social status as well as financial position suffers. They strive to achieve their lost power through indirect means and resort to immoral acts. Lady Susan tries to allure men by using her charms. In this effort she does not spare even rich married men for she needs their money. On the other hand Mrs. Norris tries to retain her status by taking charge of her sister's house by pretending that she is helping her manage the household affairs. This pretence makes Mrs. Bertram more dependent on her sister till Mrs. Norris becomes indispensable and indirectly starts ruling her sister's house. For more information see Brodie. Laura Fairchild, *Society and Superfluous Females: Jane Austen's Treatment of Widowhood Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Autumn, 1994

³³ If we consider Richardson's idea of marriage; as the female protagonist Clarissa states, that by marrying "a woman had: to give up her very name, as a mark of her becoming his absolute and dependent property: to be obliged to prefer this strange man to father, mother - to everybody: and his humours to all her own ... to go no-whither: to make acquaintance: to give up acquaintance: to renounce even the strictest friendships perhaps; all at his pleasure, whether she think it reasonable to do so or not" (196).

³⁴ In *Emma*, too, we come across a couple serenely living a peaceful life. Isabella Knightly is a worshipping wife of John Knightly. It is an odd yet happy couple because of the love and sensibility that Isabella has to offer and is readily accepted and appreciated by John Knightly. He in turn makes rational decisions that are accepted with goodwill and grace for he possesses "all the clearness and quickness of mind which she wanted" (93). They complement each other and manage to remain satisfied.

³⁵ Even Emma, who has never been outside Hartfield, goes to Donwell, a neighbouring village to broaden her understanding of other men and women of her society. She becomes conscious of her own female faults and learns about the others through this visit. Interestingly she does not go far yet it is this journey which brings her to self-realization. In earlier times, female were deprived of worldly education and their so called accomplishment confined them to the knowledge of drawing, dancing, modern languages and the so called 'conduct books'. They did not know what freedom meant as we do in the modern age. Austen's heroine react against the norms of their time by becoming aware of their 'self' and refusing to succumb to the dictation of their society. In their own way they are the forerunners of the feminist movement.

³⁶ *The Contract* by Emily Dickenson opens like this

I gave myself to him,

And took himself for pay.

The solemn contract of a life

Was ratified this way (451).

Emily Dickinson, *The Complete works of Emily Dickinson* (USA: Harvard University Press 1966)

Conclusion

It is a common observation that man is dominated by the desire of physical objects rather than mental development. There are some who interpret power as self-fulfillment and strive for it. They establish their superiority over others through physical extension. Wealth is thus associated with power and people strive for it through fair or foul means. They establish their identity with it and consider it their right to subjugate others simply because the others do not have wealth. It is an old saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Darcy's dictations to Bingley would never have taken place had he the sense and desire to strive for his own happiness rather than be led by others. For Austen the power politics of one class or group of people of a community over the other reflects emptiness and insipidity for it gnaws the fruit of wholesomeness before it reaches ripeness. It disrupts social harmony and creates hatred and suffering among members of society.

The power play of different classes, moral stances, and sexual representatives that we see in the Austen world, goes through a process of transition for redefining the traditional order. It is a world where relations are judged and formed in the crucible of wealth and riches. The greatest change that the characters undergo is from the physical to the psychological; the characters learn to differentiate between true happiness and physical comfort. The analyses done in this work combine to frame a new social ideology in the sense that money and social status are transitory; true happiness and contentment spring from within people if they have the consciousness that material things are a means to the end. In this context Austen becomes a social crusader. She makes the readers realize through her characters and their lives that change is unavoidable and that social status, though an integral part of society, is not a criterion to judge humans. She

manages to create self-awareness in the reader by inculcating a sensible approach towards problem analysis and one's own part in the creation of that problem. Problems can be solved through discussion and understanding which is why if Elizabeth and Darcy had not opened their hearts to each other the misunderstanding would never have been resolved.

Austen's social ideology is based on the thesis that human emotions and feelings have their validity in human life if placed in the proper context otherwise they may breed social evils like greed, hypocrisy, and selfishness. The novels subtly reveal these social and moral ills which deprive people of their peace of mind which they otherwise achieve if they do not fall a prey to them. Realization of one's self helps humans to counter all those wicked desires that destroy characters, pollute relationships, and degenerate intellectual powers. A basic lesson that we learn from the study is that education plays a vital role in creating sensible individuals who know the value of human relationships, especially as husbands and wives, who become role models for others to follow. Family is the basic unit of a society and perhaps this is why Miss Austen lays so much stress on the foundation of this unit. Critics who comment on her obsession with marriage ought to realize the importance of this institution. Children of happy families are likely to have comparatively balanced personalities for they carry the imprint of the impressions they form in their early childhood.

The moral lesson that we learn from the study is that we should not forget our weaknesses while criticizing those of others. Most of the times, our judgment of others is a reflection of our own personality. We ought to refrain from being judgmental because it deprives us of the power to analyze our frailties as humans. Self-analysis is the first step toward the moral perfection artistically delineated by Austen in her novels. In a way, her characters, both male and female, reflect the strengths and weaknesses that we argue over even today. Like

theirs we have our desires, ambitions, hopes, fears, beliefs, and opinions. We also cheat on others but preach to avoid cheating in public. Like theirs, there is a wide gap between what we say in public and what we do in private. This feature makes her characters truly human despite the names and local characteristics that particularize them as men and women of the early 19th century. There are Elizabeths, Janes, Bingleys, Darcys and Wickhams in and around us. They are not absolute figures but potential humans that we keep on meeting in all societies; old or new.

Austen concentrates on those issues that could be the cause of creating misunderstanding amongst the people which subsequently create false ideals. The conventional ideas were questioned vis-à-vis in face of new knowledge to see if they could perpetuate the new ideals. The optimistic approach we observe in *P & P*, and the confidence exhibited in the virtues of human beings is what we relearn through her novels. Characters like Darcy and Bingley in *P & P*, Mr. Knightly in *Emma*, Col. Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* are elevated because of their sympathetic attitude towards others. They are shown to be responsible towards their estate affairs, executing the affairs of their personal lives on the basis of happiness and sympathy. Generally, the rules and regulations of the society are not cruel for otherwise the masses will not conform. What we learn is that tolerance is a vital tool to happiness for it binds the humans into one social circle where there are no concepts of high or low. We see that Lydia's elopement may provide food for gossip for some time but the moment the affair is settled it is forgotten. Mary, the moralist, speaks out her fear "unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we may draw from it this useful lesson: that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable—that one false step involves her in endless ruin" (270). Yet, Lydia gets married and is respectably received by the society. Even

Lady Lucas would condole the family and “offered her services, or any of her daughters, if they could be of any use” to the family in distress. There is no cruel reaction of “triumph” (171,174).

P & P does not deal solely with abstractions but through the practicality of life Austen exposes the moral muddle in which one is caught while executing the activities of one’s daily dealings. Austen portrays her characters who become the representatives of her society. Miss Austen seems to be fully aware of the understanding of common men and women of her era hence there is no philosophical passages which need an intellectual’s guidance to understand. To say that *Pride and Prejudice* or for that matter her other novels deal superficially with the ethics is again refutable for she wrote as a member of the society in which she lived and was fully aware of the superficiality of their moral condition.

The social philosophy as developed in P & P is not abstract rather it is practical; all that we learn from this issue through her novels is derived from her society: living among them she observed their dealings and interaction. Her characters are true social representatives of their society. She knows them, and portrays them, as she finds them. She did not need any philosophical system to explain their behaviour through analyses or judge their actions. Their intricacies are self-developed rising out of petty issues. It is the superficiality of their behaviour and morals that she subtly criticizes through irony. Her characters are not black and white; the only matter of concern is that they are oblivious of their weaknesses. She makes people see their reflections and identify with their idiosyncrasies.

For Miss Austen, norms and mores need flexibility and adjustment with the changing times. In her society the propriety of speech and manners are enforced so the heart’s desire is never articulated and ends up in misunderstandings. Lack of trust becomes apparent among the classes and each views the other in a guarded manner: this leads to power play in every part of

life. The desire to possess more than the others makes even greed appear justifiable; resultantly it leads people to resort to schemes: turning their environment into a “world of social commerce” (Mooneyham xi) rather than desire for personal fulfillment.

Miss Austen I gather believes in a democratic society where every individual has his worth and there is a constant interaction between the members of the society. This interactive movement is a sign of life. Pemberley lacks movement and vitality which is provided to it in the form of Elizabeth’s pleasantries. This may surprise Georgiana but it improves her knowledge of the world. Austen’s view is quite Hegelian for she does not classify the units of the society separately but considers them necessary parts of the whole. The Collins and Catbernes, no matter how much undesirable, are necessary for the society not only as foil for the protagonists or other characters, but also in themselves for they have their own specific purpose of existence. They are there to enhance the social richness and moral diversity of society by their peculiar characteristics.

Furthermore, we learn through Austen’s novels about the vast gap between those who dictate and those who are dictated, which causes discontent when personal values are threatened, and which subsequently leads to conflicts of interest. This lack of free interaction and gap of communication hinder understanding. Darcy and Elizabeth have to unite not only physically but as two different points of view to fill up this gap though much to the dismay of those who want to retain traditional order and values, i.e., Miss Bingley and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. They must come to term with this relationship and learn to accept the social change that cannot be avoided. They are made to realize that the low connections are as much part of one’s existence as the high, and that instead of polluting Pemberley, the union will ease the stiffness and reserve

of the great house. Class-pride ought not to be a hindrance to relationships; it elevates those who accept it

Nevertheless, while reading *P & P* one may ignore or resent the foolish and frivolous behaviour of the society in general, yet finally, at the end of the novel one is inclined to analyze one's behaviour. The reader starts recognizing Darcy, Elizabeth, Charlotte as well as Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh as part of oneself. One feels sorry for even Miss Bingley and Mrs. Bennet for they are not the only ones who desire eligible bachelors. We are all aspiring for the acquisition of the "eligible," though not in human form only. In the society of *P & P* there are other social issues that emerge as the novel progresses. Austen seems to be aware of bigger issues like religion, politics, social norms, education, as well as marriage. She knows how people hold diverse opinions on these subjects. She is aware of the conflicts that arose because of lack of communication among different social groups. In order to make people become aware of their shallowness she refrains from stating her point of view openly. If explicit, she would have become directly in conflict with her society. Being a woman her position is all the more vulnerable: she uses irony as her tool to communicate her own ideas by subtly making fun of things she finds amiss in her society. "We do not have a focus for approval or disapproval" (Waldron. 43) in Miss Austen's novels and the reader knows that there are no judgmental extracts in any of her novels. People, we find in her novels behave with ease when they are in their own region while they are uncomfortable at other places.

In Austen's world relationships are based on love, understanding, respect and tolerance. There is a strong relationship between objects and man as well as between one individual and another in her novels. Elizabeth, unlike other females of her society, rejects the obsession of the individual with the physical objects, especially those of comfort and status. They are potentially

threatening and may overshadow other human relationships. Humans are ruled by the desire of objects that in themselves do not provide any satisfaction. When Charlotte marries Collins, she receives all the objects of comfort but moves to the back of the house to avoid the encumbering company of the source that provides it. Whole lives are spent in the pursuit of achievement of things valueless in themselves and so contentment is not felt. For this reason Miss Austen promotes prudence in men and women, making them realize that they should direct their energies towards mental gains in the form of morality and strong ethics for that is where satisfaction lies. Charlotte cannot totally shun the society and hence sees as little of Collins as possible and Elizabeth observing her doubts of her “degree of contentment” (149). Charlotte manages to survive because she is the part of this pretentious society.

Our present society reflects all these fears and hopes even today when it comes to matrimony. We are still in pursuit of happiness and do not know how to achieve it. In utter confusion we make blunders by making the wrong choice and so the divorce rate in the new world has reached an alarming height. Splitting and breaking of families seem to be an everyday affair which results in the deficient sense of security among the new generation. We have females like Mrs. Bennet among us whose psyche is not compatible with the world around her. The easy solution to the problems that she foresees does not happen in real life and we see that her idealistic world fails to comply with the complexities of life. Austen feels for the weaknesses of such persons and sympathizes.

As good manners hid the internal turmoil and hypocrisies as well as the avarice and vanity of her characters so did her calculated and careful use of language that serves as a foil to the conflicts, disturbances and chaos of human emotions that she wants to reveal. Abstaining from direct relations of “evil” leaving it for “other pens to dwell” (MP 474). She comments on

the follies of human actions indirectly and reveals the undercurrents that created internal storms which destroy human character. Austen's choice of words proves that she was conscious of the multiple meanings that words carry. Words like "gentleman," "accomplishment," "prudence" etc. are the proof of the way she reveals different people taking these words in different contexts.

Her heroines pay less regard to the prevailing arts of self adornment and acquired graces; not even one of them is conscious about her dress. They look forward to having a pleasant time and receiving criticism with forbearance of civility than live in pursuit of an eligible match. Their foils, on the other hand, are busy attracting eligible young men: Miss Bingley, Isabella Thorpe, Lucy Steele are seen obsessed with this desire.

Power is associated with privileges and creates a desire in man to rule others. This desire, entertains and establishes a sense of superiority over others which satisfies the vanity of those who possess it. Bingley's lack of self awareness and authority lets Darcy lead him. He is conscious of Darcy's wealth and status and we hear him mention Pemberley with great regard. On the other hand, Darcy knows his power over Bingley, which is also the reason for his interference to save him from what he calls an imprudent match. His peer-like attitude is accepted without argument.

Love is a dominant theme in all of Austen's novels especially *Pride and Prejudice* and it plays a very formative role in molding characters. She does not form any philosophic dialects out of it though. She sees it more as a driving force that gives values to conducts; elevates moral sense; and enhances virtue in those who are strangers to their own human emotions. It provides people with opportunities to tolerate and forgive so as to live harmoniously.

Austen's characters are neither sinners nor saints; they are humans whom we see around us even today. We are all subject to err as well as subject to goodness. Had this not been the

case, the world would have been either a paradise or a hell. We suffer as much due to our loss as we rejoice due to our gains. We are not only inventing destructive weapons but helping humanity through friendly inventions to promote the living standards. The role of the parents needs improvement for they do not seem to take interest in teaching their children value of grace and propriety of thoughts and behaviour. The young generation is all confused and hence their moral lives become a mess. Lack of proper guidance exposes them to blunders and they have to face the consequences. What they lack is a balanced approach.

We are all social creatures abiding by the values, mores, and even moral codes of the society in which we live. We cannot afford any deviation from the prescribed norms for fear of being excommunicated or penalized by being alienated and this we cannot endure. Nor do we have to abide by some of the irrational social norms of our society. We ought to realize the challenges of the new world and learn to adjust with the changing times with dignity and grace. This is the lesson we learn from Austen's novel which is applicable to all times. Among the people of our locality matrimonial schemes based on financial gains are often practiced, for we too make economics the basis of all aspects of life. Mothers still desire good matches for their daughters and even today the criterion is money and material gains. We must free our self from this trap and realize that a single man is an alienated figure and that good fortune provides transitory satisfaction and does not necessarily provide peace of mind; matrimonial felicity; and good understanding.

As a female I learned that grace and dignity ought to be a vital part of all female existence. If women want men to respect them as individuals they ought to act in a way to earn respect and not physical admiration. The latter is not only transitory, it also damages other important capabilities and talents of women restricting them to praise and leading them to vanity.

To become an important member of the society women should not rely on making marriage into social contract; nor should she base her life on sexual contract alone. A balanced synthesis of both with a good understanding of each other perhaps will lead to the felicity that is the center of every happy home. Relationships should be based on tolerance and understanding for only then they can bear fruit of happiness and contentment.

Whatever is the reason of female weaknesses in the past we must realize that all this is the story of bygone days. The woman of today bears affinity to Elizabeth Bennet more than Jane Bennet. She has become conscious of her rights and wants to preserve her graces. She wants to live her life on her own terms. Men have to realize this truth and accept it with an open mind and open heart and enjoy the bliss of true happiness. It is just tolerance away!

Bibliography

Alison, Searle. *The Moral Imagination: Biblical Imperatives, Narrative and Hermeneutics in Pride and Prejudice*. (Renascence Fall 2006, Vol. 59 Issue 1): Pp.17-32, 16p
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login> (23-12-07).

Allen, Walter. *The English Novel*. London: Penguin Books Ltd. 1954.

Appelbaum, Richard P., *Theories of Social Change*. Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970.

Arac, Jonathan. *Truth* PMLA > Vol. 115, No. 5 (Oct. 2000) Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/>

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. London: David Campbell Ltd, 1992.

-----*Jane Austen's Letters*. Ed. Deirdre Le Faye. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

----- "Letter to her Nephew." *Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others*. Ed. R. W. Chapman. London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1932.

----- *Emma*. London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd, 1991.

----- *Letters to her sister Cassandra and Others*. Ed. R.W. Chapman, 2 Vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932 (2nd Ed. 1952).

----- *Mansfield Park*. London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd, 1992.

----- *Pride and Prejudice*. London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd, 1991

----- *Sanditon and Other Stories*. London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd, 1996.

Austen-Leigh, James Edward. *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1871.

Babington, Macaulay Thomas. "Diary and Letters of Madam D'Arblay an Unsigned Article." *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. LXXVI, (January 1843).

Backscheider, Paula R. (Editor) *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*. Baltimore, MD, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar> downloaded 12-6-10

Backscheider, Paula R. (Editor) *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*. Baltimore, MD, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

- Barron, Barron. Nokes, David. In *Market, Morality and Sentiment: Eighteenth Century Novel* appeared in *Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature: The Novel*. Ed. Roberts Andrew Michael. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, 1993.
- Beauvoir, Simon de. *The Second Sex*. London: David Campbell Publishers Ltd, 1993.
- Benditt, Theodore M. "The Virtue of Pride: Jane Austen as a Moralist." *The Journal of Value Inquiry*. (37); Pp. 245-257. Netherlands: Klumer Academic Publications, 2003. www.springerlink.com 2.10.07
- Benedict, Barbra M. *Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* > Vol. 42, No. 3, Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer, 2002), pp. 619-664 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org> 26-1-08
- Benedict, Barbra M., *Jane Austen and the Culture of Circulating Libraries: The Culture of female Literacy* in Paula R. Backscheider. Ed. *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000 <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar>
- Blair, Hugh. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters* Ed. Harold E. Harding. 2 Vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1965.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bottomer, Phyllis Ferguson. Sutherland, Eileen (Foreword by); Attwood, Tony (Foreword by). *So Odd a Mixture: Along the Autistic Spectrum in 'Pride and Prejudice'*. (London, GBR: Jessica Kingsley Publishers) 2007. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/pg=9>
- Brandt, Richard B. *Value and Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics*. New York/ Chicago/ San Francisco/ Atlanta: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1961.
- Brann, Eva T. H. *Aristotle from a Woman's Perspective* Review of Politics Vol. 58 No. 4 199.
- , "Aristotle from a Woman's Perspective." *The Review of Politics* > Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 1996), pp. 817-819 <http://links.jstor.org/sici=0034->
- Brannmark, Johan. *From Virtue to Decency* Metaphilosophy Journal (Vol. 37 No. 5 October 2006). www.blackwellsynergy.com
- Braphy, Brigid. *Introduction to Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice*. London: Pan Classic, 1967.
- Brodie, Laura Fairchild. "Society and Superfluous Female: Jane Austen's Treatment of Widowhood." *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* > Vol. 34, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn 1994) Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/>

- Brody, Miriam. *Manly Writing: Gender, Rhetoric, and the Rise of Composition*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP 1991.
- Bronte, Charlotte. "Letter to G.H. Lewes, January 12, 1848." *The Brontes: Their Friendships, Lives, and Correspondence*. Eds. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1980.
- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights* New York: The New American Library. Inc. 1847, 1959.
- Brown, Julia Prewitt. "The Feminist Depreciation of Austen: A Polemical Reading Novel." *A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Spring 1990) Duke University Press, <http://www.jstore.org/stable> downloaded on 10-6-10
- Brown, Lloyd W. "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition." *Nineteenth Century Fiction*. Vol. 28. No. 3, (1973).
- Bulwer, Edward Lytton. *England and the English* (1831) ed. Standish Meachum Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1970.
- Butler, Bishop Jeremy. *A Critique of Egoist Psychology* printed in Brandt. Richard B. *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics*. New York/ Chicago/ San Francisco/ Atlanta: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1961.
- Callahan, Sidney. "Ethical Expertise and Personal Character." *The Hastings Centre Report*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (May-June, 1994. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/> 19-1-08
- Campbell, George. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* Ed. Lloyd E. Bitzer 1963. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP 1988.
- Carlyle, Thomas, *Sartors Resartus* New York: Odyssey Press 1937.
- Carson, Ronald A., *Sensibility and Rationality in Bioethics* The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 24, No. 3. (May-Jun., 1994): Pp. 24-25. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093>
- Cohen, Paula Marantz. *Jane Austen's rejection of Rousseau: A novelistic and feminist initiation* Papers on Language and Literature, Summer 1994. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/pg_6 (9-4-08)
- Collins, Irene. *Jane Austen and the Clergy*. Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1994.
- Copeland, Edward. Mc Master. Juliet, *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997

- Copeland, Edward. *What's a Competence? Jane Austen, Her Sister Novelists, and the 5% 's*. Modern Language Studies 9 (1979).
- Correspondence with Mr. Clarke, from Austen-Leigh's *Memoir* J. S. Clarke. Letter no. ii and iii <http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/brablt19.html#letter107> 7-12-07
- Craft, Catherine. A. *Reworking Male Models: Aphra Behn's Fair Vow Breaker, Eliza Haywood's Fantomina, and Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote* The Modern Language Review 86.4 (1991)
- Craik, W. A. *Jane Austen: The Six Novels* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1965.
- Crossman, Robert. *World's a Stage: Shakespeare and the Dramatic View of Life*. Bethesda, MD, USA: Academica Press, LLC, 2005.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10171161&ppg=116>
- Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature Vol. II*. London: Secker & Warburg 1960.
- Daiches. David, *A Critical History of English Literature Vol. 111* (England: Martin Secker and Warburg ltd. 1960)
- Darwal, Stephen L. *Virtue* 2002books.google.com/book ISBN=06312311 45 4-2-2008
- Davidoff, Leonore. and Hall. Catherine, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780– 1850*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987
- Davidson, Jenny. *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*. West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press 2004.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/pg=88>
- De Leon, David. *Everything is changing: Contemporary US Movements in Historical Perspective*. New York: Praeger, 1988.
- Devlin, D. D. *Jane Austen and Education* New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975.
- Dickinson, Emily. *The Complete works of Emily Dickinson* USA: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Doob. Christopher Bates, *Sociology: An Introduction* (New York: CBS College Publishing 1985)

- Dooley, D. J. *Pride, Prejudice and Vanity in Elizabeth Bennet Nineteenth-Century Fiction* > Vol. 20, No. 2 (Sep., 1965), pp. 185-188 .Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici> 20-2-08
- Douglas, Francis. *Reflections on Celibacy and Marriage* New York: Garland Press 1984.b
downloaded 12-6-10
- Darwall, Stephen L.Ed. *Virtue Ethics*. New York: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002.
- Eagleton, Mary. & Pierce, David. *Attitudes to class in the English Novel from Walter Scott to David Storey* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1979.
- Elton, Oliver. *A Survey of English Literature 1780-1830 Vol. i*. London: Edward Arnold [publishers] Ltd, 1955.
- Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. 8. Chicago: William Benton Pub, 1966.
- Etzioni, Amitai. & Etzioni-Halevy, Eva. *Social Change: Sources, Patterns and Consequences*. (2nd Ed). New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Evans, Ifor. *English Literature: Values and Traditions*. London: C. Tinling and Co. Ltd, 1962.
- Ewbank. Inga-Stina, *Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Bronte Sisters as Early Victorian Novelists*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966.
- Fielding, Henry. *Tom Jones* London: Penguin Books 1749, 1985.
- Ford, Borris. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature From Blake to Byron*. New York: Penguin Group, 1982.
- Gallagher, Catherine. "Nobody's Story: Gender, Property, and the Rise of the Novel." *Modern Language Quarterly*. Vol. 53, No. 3, (Sept 92).
- Gallop, David. "Jane Austen and Aristotelian Ethics." *Philosophy Muse*.
jhu.edu/journals/philosophy_and_literature/v023/23.1gallop.html
- , "Jane Austen and Aristotelian Ethics." *Philosophy and Literature*. Vol. 23, No. 1, (Apr 1999). <http://muse.jhu.edu>.
- Giffin, Michael. *Jane Austen and Religion: Salvation and Society in Georgian England*. Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10044866&ppg=117>
- Gilman, Eric. "Objectivity in Conduct." *Philosophy* Vol. 29, No. 111. (Oct., 1954): Pp. 308-320
Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici>

- Ginger, John. *The Female Aegis or, the Duties of Women from Childhood to Old Age, and in Most Situations of Life, Exemplified*. London: Sampson Low, Berwick Street, Soho, for J. Ginger, 1798.
- Gisborne, Thomas. *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* London: T. Cadell, 1797.
- Gubar, Susan. and Gilbert, Sandra. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* 1979. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Gunn, Daniel P. *In the Vicinity of Winthrop: Ideological Rhetoric in Persuasion*, Nineteenth Century Literature, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Mar 1987), <http://links.jstor.org> 21-1-08
- Hardy, Barbra. *A Reading of Jane Austen*. NJ: Atlantic Highlands, 1997.
- Hargrove, Eugene C. *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*. Denton T X: Environmental Ethics Books, 1989.
- Harper, Charles L. *Exploring Social Change: American and the World*. 3rd Ed. NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, 1998.
- Hayley, William. *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids*. London: T. Cadell, 1785
- Hays, Mary. *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women*. London, 1798. *The Laws Respecting Women: as They Regard Their Natural Rights, or Their Connections and Conduct* London, 1777.
- Hazlitt, Williams. *The Spirit of the Age*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Heiland, Donna. *Gothic and the Generation of Ideas* Literature Compass, Volume 4, Issue I , Page 48-65, Jan. 2007, doi: 10. 1111/j.1741-4113. 2006.00414.x
- Heiland, Donna. *Gothic and the Generation of Ideas* Literature Compass, Volume 4, Issue I , Page 48-65, Jan. 2007, doi: 10. 1111/j.1741-4113. 2006.00414.
- Heydt-Stevenson, Jill. *Slipping into Ha-Ha; Bawdy Humor and Body Politics in Jane Austen's Novels* Nineteenth-Century Literature, Vol. 55, No. 3. (Dec 2000): Pp.309-339. StableURL: <http://links.jstor.org/search>
- Huby, Pamela M. *Review: Aristotle's Social Science* The Classical Review New Ser., Vol. 41, No. 2 (1991): Pp. 368-369 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0009->

- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principals of Morals, Section ii Of Benevolence Part I Ethical Theories* A Book of Readings Second Edition. NJ, USA: Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, 1962.
- James, Henry. *The Art of Fiction* (1908) Longman's Magazine, iv (Sep. 1884). Reprt. *Partial Portraits* London, 1888.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Morality versus Ethical Substance* Social Text No. 8 (Winter, 1983) Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/>
- Jameson, Fredric. *Morality versus Ethical Substance* Social Text > No. 8 (Winter, 1983) Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0164->
- Jenny, Davidson. *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen* (West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press) 2004.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10130440&ppg=13>
- Joachim, H. H. *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Jones, Chris. *Jane Austen and the Public Sphere* Literature Compass, Volume 3, Issue 3, Page 429-443, May 2006.
- Jones, Robert W. *Ruled Passions: Re-Reading the Culture of Sensibility* Eighteenth-Century Studies 32.3 (1999) 395-402(7-4-08) Eighteenth-Century Studies 32.3 (1999) 395-402(7-4-08) <http://www.csusm.edu/mstoddar/reveessay2.html>
- Jones, W. T. *Public Roles, Private Roles, and Differential Moral Assessments of Role Performance Ethics* > Vol. 94, No. 4 (Jul 1984), Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/> (6-3-08)
- Jung, Carl G. *Man and his Symbols*. New York: Dell Publishing House, 1964.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critic of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy* translated by L. W. Beck University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1949.
- Kaplan, Laura. *The Two Gentlemen of Derbyshire: Nature vs. Nature* Jane Austen Society of North America. Persuasion on-line V. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2005).
- Kelly, Gary. *English Fiction of Romantic Period, 1789-1830*. London and New York: Longman Pub, 1989.
- Kieran, Matthew. *Art, Morality and Ethics: On the [Im]Moral Character of Art Works and Inter-Relations to Artistic Value* Philosophy Compass 1/2 (2006): 129-143, © Blackwell Publishing 2006 10. 11 11/j. 1747-9991.2006.00019.x

- Kirkham, Margaret. *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction*. Sussex: Harvester Press, 1983.
- Kuhns, Richard. *The Beautiful and the Sublime* in Narrative Analysis and Interpretation *New Literary History* > Vol. 13, No. 2. (Winter, 1982) pp. 287-307 <http://links.jstore.org> dated 2-5-09
- Lambdin, Laura C. *Companion to Jane Austen Studies*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, 2000. p. 34 <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/pg=469-4-08>
- Lascelles, Mary. *Jane Austen and her Art*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Lawrence, D. H. *On John Glassworthy in the English Novel*. Ed. Stephan Hazell. London: Macmillan press Ltd, 1978.
- Legouis. Emile, *A Short History of English Literature* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1953)
- Lennox, Charlotte. *The Female Quixote*, 2 Vol. in 1. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1970.
- Lester, Crocker. G., *Rousseau's Social Contract: An Interpretive Essay*. Cleveland: Western Reserve University, 1968.
- Lewis, C. S. *Selected Literary Essays* (London: Cambridge University Press) 1969.
- Litz, A. Walton. *Jane Austen: A Study of her Artistic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1965.
- Locke, John. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* 5th Edition. 1975, ed. James I. Axtell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Louden, Robert B. *Social Theory and Practice* Oct. 2007, Vol. 33 Issue 4. <mailto:louden@maine.edu> retrieved on 23-1-08.
- MacIntyre, Alastair. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *The Nature of the Virtues* The Hastings Center Report, Vol. II, No. 2 (April 1981), pp. 27-34 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/> (3-4-08).
- Madsen, Deborah L. *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.
- Mair, G. H. *Modern English Literature, 1450-1959*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.

- Malcomson, A. P. W. *The Pursuit of the Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland, 1750–1820*. Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1982.
- Marsh, Nicholas. *Jane Austen: The Novels*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Massie, Allan. *The Novel Today: A critical Guide to the British Novel 1970-1989* London, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1991.
- McMaster, Juliet. *Jane Austen's Achievement*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976.
- McMaster, Juliet. "Class." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* Edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Mercer. Belaine E. and Wanderer. Jules J. *The Study of Society* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company 1970)
- Merkel, Peter H. Weinberg, Leonard. *The Revival of Right-wing Extremism in the Nineties*. Portland: Frank Cass, 1997.
- Mews, Hazel. *Frail Vessels: Woman's Role in Women's Novels from Fanny Burney to George Eliot*. London: Athlone Press Ltd, 1969.
- Mill, John Stuart. On *Liberty Parker* London 1859 Rept in *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Brandt. Richard B. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1961.
- Miller, James. *The Abyss of Philosophy: Rousseau's Concept of Freedom*, Modern Intellectual History, 3, 1 (2006), pp. 95–103 (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom) 2006 doi: 10.1017/S1479244305000624. Downloaded on 7-3-08
- Millet, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. London: Virago Press, 1977.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual /Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2002.
- Mooneyham, Laura. G. Romance. *Language and Education in Jane Austen's Novels*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988.
- Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Morgan, Susan. "In the Meantime: Character and Perception." *Jane Austen's Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Morgan, Marjorie. *Manners, Morals, and Class in England. 1774-1858*. New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1994.

- Muir, Edwin. *The Structure of the Novel*. Ed Judith O'Neill. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970.
- Murray, Venetia. *An Elegant Madness*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1999.
muse.jhu.edu/journals/philosophy_and_literature/v023/23.1gallop.html
- Nazar, Hina. *The Imagination Goes Visiting: Jane Austen, Judgment, and the Social* Nineteenth Century Literature. Vol. 59, No. 2 (Sept 2004) Stable URL: <http://lonks.jstore.org/23-12-07>.
- Neale, R. S. *1860-1850: A Social History*. Rept. New York University Press, 2001.
- Nowell-Smith; P. H., Lemmon E. J., Mind > New Series, Vol. 69, No. 275 (Jul., 1960), pp. 289-300. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici> (30-1-08)
- O' Farrell, Mary Ann. *Austen's Blush Novel: A Forum on Fiction* > Vol. 127, No. 2, (Winter 1994) <http://links.jstor.org/4-1-08>
- Oberschall, Anthony. *Social movements: Ideologies, Interests and Identities*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1992.
- Perkins, Moreland. *Reshaping the Sexes in Sense and Sensibility*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998.
- Perrine. Laurence. *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc, 1983.
- Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818*. West Nyack, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/pg=207> (3-6-08)
- Plato. *Euthyphro, in Plato, Plato on the Trial and Death of Socrates* Translated by Lane. NY: Cornel University Press, 1994.
- Price, Martin. *Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Price, Richard. *Observations on Reversionary Payments: On Schemes for Providing Annuities for Widows, and for Persons in Old Age; On the Method of Calculating the Values of Assurances on Lives; and On the National Debt*. London: T. Cadell & W. Davis, 1771.
- Price, Martin. "Manners, Morals, and Jane Austen Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Jane Austen*. Vol. 30, No. 3, 1775-1975 (Dec 1975): Pp. 261-280.

-----. *The Other Self, Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983.

Rachlin, Howard. *Science of Self Control*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Rackham, H. *Ethics for English Readers*, translation of Aristotle, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher) 1952 and reprinted in *Value and Moral Obligation, Systematic Readings in Ethics* by Richard B. Brandt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc, 1961.

Richardson, Samuel. A., *Pamela*. London: Penguin Classics, 1985.

-----. *Clarissa* (1747-48). Ed. Angus Ross. London: Penguin Classics, 1985.

Richman, H. P. *Escapism: The Logical Basis of Ethics* Mind > New Series, Vol. 72, No. 286 (Apr 1963): Pp. 273-274. Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/> (30-1-08).

Ross, Deborah. *Mirror, Mirror. The Didactic Dilemma of the Female Quixote* Studies in English Literature. Restoration and 18th Century, Vol. 27. No. 3, (Summer 1987) Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0039->

Ruderman, Anne Crippin. *The Pleasures of Virtue: Political Thoughts in the Novels of Jane Austen*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.) 1995.

Russon, John. *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology* Bloomington: Indiana University Press USA) 2004. [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/\(29-1-08\)](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/(29-1-08))

Sabiston, Elizabeth J. *Private Spheres to World Stage: From Austen to Eliot* (England: Ashgate Publishing Company) 2008.

Sales, Roger. *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Saintsbury. George, *A Short History of English Literature* (Delhi: Virender Kumar Arya for AITBS Publishers & Distributers 2005)

Sampson. George, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (New Delhi: Manas Saikia for Foundation Books in arrangement with Cambridge University Press 2006)

Scott-James. R. A. *The Making of Literature* (London: Mercury Books 1963)

Seymore, Dom Nicholas. *Jane Austen's Clergymen*. Address to Jane Austen Society AGM at Chawton House. – 17th July 1993 <http://www.starcourse.org/abbey/JACl.html> 12-11-07

- Shaffer, Julia A. "The Ideological Interventions of Ambiguities in the Marriage Plot: Who Fails Marianne in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*?" *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. Ed Alfred Harbage. New York: Viking Penguin, 1977.
- Shaw, Valerie. "Jane Austen's Subdued Heroines, Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Jane Austen*. Vol. 30 No. 3. (1775-1975). Dec 1975 <http://links.jstor.org> (23-1-08)
- Sherry, James. *Pride and Prejudice: the Limits of Society Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* Vol. 19, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1979), Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/> (6-4=08)
- Smith, Johanna M. "I am a Gentleman's Daughter': A Marxist-Feminist Reading of *Pride and Prejudice*", 67-73 in Marcia McClintock Folsom. Ed *Approaches to Teaching Austen's Pride and Prejudice*. (Mod. Lang. Assn. of Amer.) 1993.
- Smith, Johanna M. *The Oppositional Reader and Pride and Prejudice* in Lambdin, Laura C. *Companion to Jane Austen Studies*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, 2000. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=10017921&ppg=45>
- Smith W. Ronald and Preston. Frederick W. *Sociology an Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1977)
- Solomon, Robert C. "Reasons for Love." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. 32 (1), 1–28. USA (2002) Volume 32, Issue 1, Page 1-28, Mar 2002, doi: 10.1111/1468-5914.00173 19-1-08
- Southam, B. C. *Jane Austen, 1870-1940*. (London, UK: Routledge) 1995. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/pg=180>
- Spencer, Jane. *The Rise of the Female Novelists*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986.
- Spinoza, Baruch De. *Baruch Spinoza: The Complete Works*. Ed Michael L. Morgan. Trans. by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.
- Spring, David. *Interpreters of Jane Austen's Social World: Literary Critics and Historians*, *Jane Austen: New Perspectives*. Ed Janet Todd. New York and London: Holmes and Meir, 1983.
- Stone, Lawrence. *Broken Lives: Separation and Divorce in England, 1660– 1857* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1995.

- Taylor, Gabriel. *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Teachman, Debra. *Understanding Pride & Prejudice : A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources & Historical Documents*. Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc, 1997. p108. [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/Peshawar\(18-1-09\)](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/Peshawar(18-1-09))
- The World Book Encyclopaedia*. USA: World Book Inc, 1988.
- Trevelyan. G. M. *English Social History* (London: Penguin Books Ltd. 1942)
- Turner, Tony. *Jane Austen*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1986.
- Waldron, Mary. *Jane Austen & the Fiction of Her Time*. Port Chester, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1999. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/Doc?id=2000764&ppg=52>
- Walzer, Arthur E. *Rhetoric and Gender in Jane Austen's Persuasion*. College English, Vol. 57, No. 6. (Oct., 1995): Pp. 688-707. Stable URL: <http://links.jstore.org/sici=0010-19-1-08>
- Ward, A. C., *Illustrated History of English Literature*. London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd, 1962.
- , *Illustrated History of English Literature* London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd, 1962.
- Warren, Leland E. "Of the Conversation of Women: The Female Quixote and the Dream of Perfection Studies in Elizabethan- Century Culture." *American Society for 18th Century Studies*. Vol 2 (1982).
- Weisser, Susan Ostrov. Ed. *Women & Romance: A Reader*. New York, NY, USA: New York University Press, 2001. P. 268. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/peshawar/downloaded> on 11-12-08
- Whalan, Pamela. *Understanding the society in which Jane Austen sets Pride and Prejudice*" <http://www.jasa.net.au/study/indivsoc.htm> 12-2-08
- White, R. J., *Life in Regency England*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1963.
- Wiesenfarth, Joseph. *The Errand of Form* (New York: Fordham University Press) 1967.
- Wiltshire, John. *Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion in The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen* ed. Copeland. Edward, and McMaster. Juliet, (London: Cambridge University Press) 1997.
- Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth*. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1990.

Wolf, Susan, *Moral Saints* *The Journal of Philosophy* > Vol. 79, No. 8 (Aug., 1982), pp. 419-439 Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/4-2-08>.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Boston: T. Thomas & E. T. Andrews, 1792.

-----, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life*. London: Oxford English Books. 1787

Woolf, Leonardo. *Critics on Jane Austen*. Ed. Judith O'Neill. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1970.

Wordsworth, William. *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* appeared in *English Critical Texts 16th Century to 20th Century* edited by Enright, D. J. and Chickera, Ernst de. London: Oxford University Press 1962

Wright, Andrew H. *Jane Austen's Novels*. London: Penguin Books, 1962.

Younkins, Edward W. *Rousseau's "General Will" And Well Ordered Society*
<http://www.quebecoislibre.org/05/050715-16.htm> (4-3-08)

Zweck, Dina Von. Smith, Jaye. *Venus Unbound*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1989.