

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Jane Eyre's Search for Identity, Freedom, Equality and Individuality  
in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, P.N. Campus, Pokhara  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Degree of  
Master of Arts in English

By

Man Bahadur Dangol

Class Roll No:-71/2062

Exam Roll No:-186

T.U. Regd. No: - 9-1-48-1763-98

Department of English

P.N. Campus, Pokhara

March, 2011

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Prithvi Narayan Campus, English Department

**Letter of Recommendation**

This is to certify that Mr. Man Bahadur Dangol has prepared this thesis entitled “Jane Eyre’s Search for Identity, Freedom, Equality and Individuality in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*” under my guidance and supervision. I, therefore, forward to consider it for final evaluation, approval and acceptance.

---

Mr. Rajendra Prasad Tiwari  
Reader  
Department of English  
Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

This thesis entitled “Jane Eyre’s Search for Identity, Freedom, Equality, and Individuality in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*”

submitted to the Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara,

by Mr. Man Bahadur Dangol

has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head of Department of English  
Prithvi Narayan Campus,  
Pokhara

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Acknowledgements**

Many people have contributed in various ways to the development of this research. It would not have been conceived and concretized without the encouragement and support of many professionals and individuals from different walks of life.

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Rajendra Prasad Tiwari, my respected teacher and supervisor, for his strenuous observation and knowledgeable support in revising and making improvement the texture of presentation. I am very much obliged to his diligent scholarly support and constructive suggestion in spite of his hectic schedule.

I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Man Bahadur K.C., Head of the Department of English, and the members of the thesis committee for granting me the opportunity to carry out this research work. I am equally grateful to all my respected teachers and seniors who imparted the knowledge and insight of different subjects which has ultimately become helpful and useful to accomplish this research.

Similarly, my sincere appreciation goes to my friend and well-wisher, Mr. Nirmal Poudel, for his warm co-operation. I am very much thankful to my spouse, Sheela, who tirelessly supported me for the completion of this research work.

Finally, I owe much to the writers of the books, articles and criticisms listed in the 'work cited' for their ideas that have contributed a significant proportion of contents of this thesis research.

March, 2011

Man Bahadur Dangol

## Table of Contents

**Letter of Recommendation**

**Approval Letter**

**Acknowledgements**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter one: Charlotte Bronte and <i>Jane Eyre</i></b>	<b>1—10</b>
Bronte's <i>Jane Eyre</i>	1
Review of Literature	5
<b>Chapter Two: Feminism</b>	<b>11—23</b>
Patriarchy and Feminism	11
The Role of Female in the Victorian era	17
Female Consciousness	18
Rise of Feminist Awareness	21
<b>Chapter Three: Jane's Search for Identity, Freedom, Equality and Individuality</b>	<b>24—51</b>
Jane's Protest against Injustice at Gateshead	24
Jane's Rebellious Expression at Lowood	27
Jane's Conflict with Rochester	29
Jane's Conflict with St. John Rivers	39
Jane's Decision to Marry Mr. Rochester	45
<b>Chapter Four: Jane's Establishment of her Identity, Equality and Freedom</b>	<b>52—57</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>58—60</b>

## Chapter: One

### Charlotte Bronte and *Jane Eyre*

#### Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Bronte (1816 – 1855), the author of *Jane Eyre*, is one of the most well - known and the earliest Victorian female novelists in England . She is almost as famous for her short, tragic life as for her novels .In her works, she describes love truthfully that was common in Victorian age. In the past 40 years Charlotte Bronte's reputation has risen rapidly and feminist criticism has done much to show that she was speaking up for oppressed women of every age. She has made notable contribution to the English novel. Her chief novels are: *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853) and *The Professor* (1857).

In the Victorian time, literary society in England was a very small world. For a complete unknown to publish a successful novel was relatively unusual. The three Bronte sisters chose to publish their books under male pen names as Currer [Charlotte], Acton [Anne], and Ellis[Emily] Bell. They did this partly to escape the prejudice against women novelists and partly to avoid embarrassing friends and acquaintances who might find themselves portrayed in the novels. As it turned out, the pen names only helped to make the Brontes more famous. Everyone was wildly curious to figure out the true identities of Currer, Acton and Ellis Bell. By the time the truth became widely known, Emily and Anne were dead. Charlotte was the only Bronte who became a literary celebrity during her own life time, but all three sisters were well on their way to becoming cult heroines. The Bronte sisters represent the “stormy sisterhood” i.e. the passion in English fiction.

Charlotte's life was one of sorrow and struggle of which she has given so bold a picture in her novel *Jane Eyre*. She has imparted the romantic note of imagination and passion to the English novel. She turns her gaze to the souls of her characters and presents powerful studies of souls in deep anguish in her novels. She is not interested in the portrayal of social life; rather she chooses to study the feminine heart and presents the woman's point of view in her novels. She inaugurates a new conception of the heroine in English fiction, as a woman of vital strength and passionate feelings. *Jane Eyre* is such a novel of Bronte which studies of feminine life and soul providing glimpses into the tortured and suffering soul of her heroine. Bronte experiences life within a narrow confines but her narrow and limited experience does not stand in the way of her achieving excellence in her work. She has the experience of life as governess, school teacher and pupil, and she repeats the same scenes and experiences. Charged emotional atmosphere is the most remarkable feature of her novels. Love in her novels is highly passionate and sensuous by temperament. Her novels are worth taking seriously. Much of the interest in her has been biographical. Every page of Charlotte Bronte's novels burns and breathes with vitality.

*Jane Eyre (1847)* is Charlotte Bronte's masterpiece and first published novel, with an overriding theme of love. Memories of the harsh conditions at the boarding school, which caused her sister's death, find an echo in her first description of Lowood school in *Jane Eyre*. The novel is seen as achieving a proper balance between the real and the true, and there are some accurate appreciations of the different voices in the novel, with distinctions drawn between the youthful Jane, the mature Jane and the authorial voice of Charlotte. *Jane Eyre* is Bronte's nearest claim to perfection.

Bronte's novel, *Jane Eyre* is the famous tale of an orphan that is written in a first person narrative of the title character. The novel deals with an almost melodramatic abandon, out of her own passions, dreams and frustrations. Parts of the book are practically straight autobiography and other parts represent the kind of wish-fulfillment which few Victorian women had the courage or the power to translate into fiction.

The novel goes through five distinct stages: Jane's childhood at Gateshead, where she is emotionally and physically abused by her aunt and cousins; her education at Lowood School, where she acquires friends and role models but also suffers privations; her time as the governess of Thornfield Hall, where she falls in love with her master, Edward Rochester; her time with the Rivers family at Marsh's End (or Moor House) and Morton, where her cold clergyman-cousin St. John Rivers proposes to her; and her reunion and marriage with her beloved Rochester. Jane is a very independent and strong woman; she does not want to be anyone's mistress or marry anyone she does not love. She rejects St. John's proposal of marriage and going with him to India as missionary. St. John could never love her the way she needs to be loved. Jane believes that marriage without love is just sacrilege. She looks for marriage full of love and companionship, and she ultimately finds it, which is the focal point of this study.

Charlotte Bronte could not really identify with the female role of her period. Through the voice of a very intense, almost claustrophobically self-aware young heroine, Jane Eyre, she criticizes some aspects of this role. One of these aspects is her strong belief in a woman's need to work: "women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties..."



and it is narrow-minded... to say that they ought to confine them-selves to making puddings and knitting stockings” (95).

Being a governess and an author herself, Bronte denied society's view that the female Vocation was the mere housewife. She herself feared such a restriction before her own wedding with Arthur Bell Nicholls: “But those duties are not everything and I cannot conceal from myself that he is not intellectual;...it might be dull”(Freedman 91) Consequently, Bronte shared with other women writers an increasing skepticism about the satisfaction marriage could offer women. She strongly disapproved of the unequal distribution of right in marriage. In her eyes independence and autonomy were preconditions to finding fulfillment in a relationship. Accordingly, female independence plays a pivotal role in *Jane Eyre*. The character of Jane Eyre is modelled on her own experiences. Jane wants much more than a dominating broad-chested lover with a grim jaw, a harsh line in banter and great dark eyes. She wants independence, she wants money of her own, she wants work for her imagination and intellect, she wants a house with beloved people in it, she wants liberty and power. Above all, she wants to be herself. Rochester expresses Jane's attitude in words: “I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me to do so. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at price I cannot afford to give” (176).

A further aspect of criticism, which can also be found in the novel, is the absence of love a marriage of convenience was no rarity in those days: “I have not yet said anything condemnatory of Mr. Rochester's project of marrying for interest and connections....were I a gentleman like him, I would take to my bosom only such a

wife as I could love” (164). Bronte believes that love and marriage are inseparable. Thus, Bronte’s idea of marriage is different in many ways from the Victorian ideal.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to Charlotte Bronte, a brief outline of *Jane Eyre* and introductory sketch of the present study and a critical review of literature. The second chapter deals with the feminism as literary tools to interpret the text. The third chapter will analyze the text with some textual extracts as an evidence to prove the hypothesis. In the light of the textual analysis in chapter three, the fourth chapter will conclude the explanation and arguments put forward in the preceding chapters.

### **Review of Literature**

Bronte’s novel has been viewed from various perspectives and there are critical texts that have analyzed her works from different established canons of literature. Many critics have examined Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* from the perspectives of autobiographical, sociological, supernatural and the feminist frame-work of criticism since its creation.

The scenes and the characters presented in the novel are lively and real based which have artistically been portrayed. Regarding the originality and freshness of the style of the novel and the natural tone pervading the narrative, G. H. Lewes states:

We have not the shadow of a doubt: nor can there be any question as to the reality of many of the scenes and personages so artistically depicted; the characters too life-like to be the mere creations of fancy.... The Rev. Mr. Brocklehurst, with his straight, narrow, sable-clad shape, the grim face at the top being like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital; the lady-like Miss Temple; sweet

Helen Burns, whose death-scene is so touchingly narrated; the neat and prim little Mrs. Fairfax and the eccentric Mr. Rochester, whom with all his faults and eccentricities one can't help getting to like; are but a few of the characters in the drama, though essential ones, and cleverly struck off.(13)

In her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Bronte has made clear her belief that “conventionality is not morality” and “self-righteousness is not religion.” Throughout the novel, Bronte presents contrast between characters who believe in and practice what she considers a true Christianity. The modern heroine, Jane Eyre, is a very independent and strong woman who rejects St John Rivers' Puritanism as much as the libertine aspects of Mr. Rochester's character. Instead, she works out a morality expressed in love, independence, and forgiveness in the novel. Lady Eastlake has different thing to say. She finds the novel as an anti-Christian composition. She asserts:

Altogether the autobiography of Jane Eyre is pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition. There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment-there is a proud and perpetual assertion of the right of man, for which we find no authority either in God's word or in God's providence.... We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has over thrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and rebellion at home, is the same which has regard to written *Jane Eyre* .....(15)

In regard to the life of Charlotte Bronte, her contemporary biographer, Elizabeth Gaskell writes that Bronte never harbored any hope for the future and she believed that “God had appointed some people for sorrow and some people for happiness.” She asserts: “All around the horizon there is this same line of sinuous wave-like hills; the scoops into which they fall only revealing other hills beyond, of similar colour and shape” (134).

Bronte has earned a high praise for *Jane Eyre* especially for her characterization of Jane. Lovingly and with unusual honesty, she explores her own nature, which in its tenderness and strength, its turbulent desires and its queer mixture of recklessness, is her chief source of inspiration. George Sampson avows, “*Jane Eyre* is a unique Victorian book because in its purity becomes passionate and outspoken. Gone is the ‘man’s woman’; here is woman herself, confronting man on equal terms. *Jane Eyre* is the first modern novel, the first to envelop the life of a plain, ordinary woman with romance” (34).

On the contrary, there is a criticism concerning the coherence and logical aptness of the novel. David Cecil comments, “*Jane Eyre* is unbelievable from start to finish.” He finds Bronte’s “incapacity to make the novel coherent, is to construct a plausible machinery of action for its component parts. Her plots are not dull; but they have every other defect that a plot could have; they are at once conventional confusing and unlikely...”(21)

Similarly, pointing to the elements of realism and romanticism and poetic intensity in the novel, S.D. Neill asserts that Bronte is to concentrate on elemental forces, as Wordsworth did in his poetry. He writes: “With *Jane Eyre* glamour comes to the novel and the two chief characters are drawn with an unforgettable poetic

intensity...*Jane Eyre* links a highly exciting and romantic story to a sober and honest realism..." (138).

Despite the nearly unanimous praise, there are widely debated aspects of Bronte's writing Bernard Groom comments on her defects of quality in the style of writing. He says:

*Jane Eyre* is by no means a faultless work. The behaviour of the fashionable Blanche Ingram, for instance, is ludicrously improbable, and, in the style is marred by frequent pedantries. But these are the defects of Charlotte Bronte's qualities. Her naiveté is the other side of her genius. (64)

The novel is the creation of the single experience of the central character with which Bronte has inventively portrayed herself in the novel. Through Jane, a rebellious character or energetic heroine, Bronte is successful in her mission to protest against the social inequality, injustice, gender disparity and social hypocrisy of the Victorian time. Kathleen Tillotson states:

For the peculiar unity of *Jane Eyre*, the use of the heroine as narrator is mainly responsible. All is seen from vantage-ground of the single experience of the central character, with which experience the author has imaginatively identified herself, and invited the engagement, again even to the point of imaginative identification, of every reader....The single point of view may be easily held at the circumference of the narrative and the emotional interest; but Jane continually, quietly, triumphantly occupies the centre, never receding into the role of mere reflected or observer. (25)

The protagonist of the novel, Jane is an intelligent, honest and modest young girl who incessantly seeks for her identity, freedom, equality and individuality. Her strong belief in gender and social equality challenges the Victorian prejudices against women and the poor. She criticizes as well as encourages herself. She does not want to lose her self-respect for anything. The personality is reflected in her habit and manner. Kathleen Tillotson adds, “Jane is self-critical, but also self-respecting; her modesty attracts while never making the reader take her at her own initial valuation. We watch a personality discovering itself not by long introspection but by a habit of keeping pace with her own experience” (26).

There are some events like Jane’s imprisonment in red room, stabbing to Mr. Mason, insane Bertha Mason and her mysterious activities at Thornfield are some examples of Gothic elements portrayed in the novel. Robert B. Hellman finds out the Gothic element in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. He asserts:

From childhood terrors to all those mysteriously threatening sights, sounds, and injurious acts that reveal the presence of some malevolent force and that anticipate the holocaust at Thornfield, the traditional Gothic in *Jane Eyre* has often been noted and as often disparaged. (32)

The nineteenth century was a “time of tumult and change, and tensions showed in the live of women” (qtd. in Hartman 7). Women in the nineteenth century were beginning to assert their strength and independence. In the context of the times, *Jane Eyre* is groundbreaking in its portrayal of a feminist character. It is an inspiring and ultimately uplifting story of rebellion against the sense of misery and claustrophobic restrictions of society. In the novel, Bronte presents the protagonist, Jane Eyre, as an independent spirit, suggesting that women in the nineteenth century

began to break away from the traits of dependency and feebleness, often associated with femininity in Victorian society and progress towards independence.

Jane does not allow male dominance to compel her to marry against her own will. Although Jane's femininity makes her inferior in society to Rivers' masculine strength in the battle of the sexes, Jane, though self-confessedly little, plain and undistinguished in talents will not accept the position of the inferior. She refuses to conform to the nineteenth century society's principle of masculine domination; instead, she asserts her strength by expressing her feelings.

Similarly, modern literary criticism has long recognized Bronte's *Jane Eyre* as a pivotal text for feminists. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's ground-breaking study "The Madwoman in the Attic" locates the enduring appeal of this novel in its emancipated narrative strategies whereby the author both conceals and reveals social and psychological truths about woman's lives, for instance, their anger at being treated as sexual objects in the marriage market, and, paradoxically, their overwhelming desire to love and be loved by men with whom they can never be equal. They further say that female authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have written "Palimpsestic" novels "whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible and less socially acceptable levels of meaning" (73).

Thus, critics have ventured to explore the different elements concerning the novel *Jane Eyre*. Bronte displays Jane Eyre's search for identity, freedom, equality and individuality in the light of Victorian tendency that is presented with the portrayal of remarkable characters such as Jane, Rochester, St. John, Helen, Rosamond, Blanche, etc. who have possessed different personalities and displayed their own

emotions and feelings. Jane's protest against social injustice, inequality, oppression and male chauvinism throughout the novel. This issue has not been focused and researched yet. The relationship between the different characters especially Jane and other male figures and their consequences will be discussed in detail in the coming chapters, especially, in the third.



## **Chapter: Two**

### **Feminism**

#### **Patriarchy and Feminism**

There has always been an intricate but invisible bond between man and woman. It is not the bond of humanity but that of power. Most often women are commoditized in this relationship. They are treated merely as a means of sadistic pleasure. From the early part of their life they are taught to internalize the patriarchal ideology which is based on male supremacy. They are included with the belief that the success of their existence depends on satisfying the masculine needs. In *Gender studies: Terms and Debates*, Anne Cranny-Francis et al. define patriarchy as a means to create social hierarchy where males always hold upper hand. She says, “Patriarchy is a social system in which structural difference in privilege, power and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and/or social positions of men” (15).

This structural difference was created from the very beginning of human civilization which created rules and behaviors appropriated to the sexes and later expressed them in customs and social values. No doubt, women’s sexuality and reproductive capacity have been the main reasons behind their devaluation and thus the basic foundation for power-formation. Since men had resources when society emerged they were able to construct philosophical, scientific and religious systems that reinforced their dominant position. This helped them in defining women as less than men obliged to sexual subordinator. Mary Murray writes:

In fact the development of absolute ownership rights vested in individuals threw up the possibility that women too, as individuals

could be absolute owners. There is no a priori reason in capitalist society that women as such be excluded from absolute ownership rights. That men have tended to acquire such rights more than women needs to be contextualized in terms of the long historical construction of masculinised property forms are the ideological implications of this. (75)

Patriarchy has its tremendous effects in different sectors. Male hegemony has been enjoying its upper hand in the interpretation and explanation which was caressed by the philosophical texts in the past and is dancing wildly in different influential fields at present. E. P. Thomson says:

I found that patriarchy did not keep politely to a 'level' but was as every bloody level...it was simultaneously present in the philosophy of Locke...reappearing bewigged and gowned in the guise of ideology, it danced a cotillion with religion ...it was an arm of politics and politics was one of its arms... it contributed to the definitions of the self-identity.... (288)

Many critics agree that theologies also propped the male's role in the society. They always presented male as the master and the female as the slave to be submissive throughout the life. Much of patriarchy also has its roots in Christianity. The Bible, which most Christians live by, states boldly that women should be submissive to men. With that in mind and those beliefs instilled in cultures, women do not stand a chance at gaining strength in their gender.

Germinated with civilization, the subjugation of women sprouted gruesomely

nourished by some new ideologies and philosophies. Whether it be the gullible Eve who caused the fall of human or the undressing of Draupadi or submissive and tolerant Sita, all the religions present women just as steps for men to reach pinnacle of pleasure and prosperity. Aquinas' support to Aristotle's concept of women as 'an incomplete man', Milton's dehumanization of women as 'Dose of poison' to Freud's assertion of incapability of women as writers due to 'lack of phallus' project how the males established their supremacy over the females through philosophy (Pateman 217). So it is evident that patriarchy is a socio-political and historical construct which must be eliminated. Pateman observes it as a private familial problem that he affirms "can be overcome if public laws and policies treat women as if they were exactly the same as men" (217).

The feminist voice for equality has a long tradition. Among the early voices of this trend was Mary Wollstonecraft. In 1792, she argued in "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" that women must challenge society's assumption of female inferiority and must strive to articulate their own identities and roles in the society. Her text is commonly acknowledged as the initiator of feminist, though pronounced its dissent from the patriarchal order of its times. Wollstonecraft described a society which kept women in a condition of oppression and inferiority, denying her the rights she was entitled to as a member of the community of beings. She invoked a revolution in the habits of women. ( qtd. in Adams 396)

Feminism calls into question about the most basic assumption about the women's existence that biological, i.e. sexual identity, determines the power relationships as well as for all levels human identity and action. It encourages the women to fight against biological determinism which has generally been

unquestioned. Twentieth- century introduced a large number of vibrant feminist critics like Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and others. They have explored deeply engraved prejudices against women. Study of different trends in the existing society has inculcated the feminist critics a pervasive binary opposition built around gender, which subordinates women to objects. The critique of the patriarchal order, the representation of women, sexual difference and questions of identity, subjectivity and agency, are all addressed in feminist discourses. They felt the necessity of deconstruction of the self-definition. Linda Alcoff says:

Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured- understood, explained, and diagnosed-to a level of determination never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as rational animal with free will...where...women's nature construed as essentially immoral and irrational...or essentially kind and benevolent...an essential something inevitably accessible to direct intuited apprehension by males. (404)

Female body or sexuality has been targeted as the focal point of exploitation. In this sense, females possess something that entices the exploiters. But avoiding the importance of female biology simply because patriarchy has used it to subjugate it is also not prudent. Quoting Adrienne Rich, Linda Alcoff further writes connecting female consciousness to the female body:

I have to believe that female biology-the diffuse, intense sensuality radiating out from clitoris, breasts, uterus, vagina, the lunar cycles of menstruation, the gestation and fruition of life which can take place in the female body-has far more radical implications than we have yet

come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its narrow specifications. The feminist vision has recoiled from female biology for these reasons, it will, I believe, come to view our physicality, our bond with the natural order, and the corporeal ground for our intelligence. (405)

Feminist dissents have started questioning the distinctions that males have injected in the society through religion, philosophy and literature. Patriarchal thinking believes that women are born to be passive while men are born to be active. It is just natural for the sexes to be different for them. Thus, if a woman is not passive, she is not regarded as a woman. In this context, women are naturally submissive to men that men are natural leaders and so forth. Helen Cixous argues that “language reveals what she calls ‘Patriarchal binary thought’, which might be defined as seeing the world in the terms of polar opposites, one of which is considered superior to the other.” She gives the examples including such hierarchical binary oppositions as “head/heart, father/mother, culture/nature, intelligible/palpable, sun/moon, and activity/passivity.” Oppositions like these organize the way we think and for each opposition Cixous asks, “Where is [the woman]?” “...the woman occupies the right side of each of these oppositions, the side that patriarchy considers inferior—heart, mother, nature, palpable, moon and passivity—while it is assumed that the male is defined by the left side of each opposition, the side that patriarchy considers superior: head, father, culture, intelligible, sun, and activity.” Traditionally, Cixous notes, “the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition activity/passivity” (qtd. in Tyson 100).

These have all contributed to the representation of woman as inferior to man and henceforth to the legitimization of men's power. The devaluating experience helped the women recognize the inadequacy for them, the distortion and the male-created ideologies which have until caged their intellectual, sociological and psychic development. This defamation and mistreatment sparked a kind of revolutionary spirit which P. Treichler and C. Kramarae think:

Sex role is based on the recognition that we live in a male dominated culture in which women remain unacknowledged, and where women are forced into sex roles which demand that they be dependent, passive, nurturing, etc. Men too must assume sex roles [but these] are not nearly as crippling as women's. (8)

Feminists attempt to articulate consciousness in women's mind. For their freedom, the ability to make conscious choices about personal relationship is centralized. Undoubtedly women who are single or celibate are stigmatized in our society. Yet some women have found the experience of living with oneself to be satisfying and liberating. But the sexual satisfaction as a biological need cannot be ignored. As males, females too deserve love, care, intimacy and in nutshell a recognition or self-identity as 'being'. Crystal Eastman voices:

Feminists are not nuns. That should be established. We want love and be loved and most of us want children; one or two at least. But we want our love to be joyous and free-not clouded with ignorance and fear. And we want our children to be deliberately, eagerly called into being, when we are at our best, not crowded up on us in times of poverty and weakness. We want this precious sex knowledge not just

for ourselves; the conscious feminists; we want it for all the millions  
feminists that swarm the earth-we want it for women. ( qtd. in  
Rowbotham 224)

The insights that emerged in consciousness raising often laid foundation for  
action projects. As women talked about their bodies, for example, they confronted  
their own woeful ignorance, a legacy of years of secrecy and shame. Convinced that  
knowledge was an essential ingredient of controlling one's own body, they  
determined to teach themselves and each other about women's physiology. Apart  
from this, women collectively or co- operatively came forth to create a position in the  
society. Linda Alcoff adds:

...being a "woman" is to take up a position within a moving historical  
context and to be able to choose what we make of this position and  
how we alter this context. From the perspective of that fairly  
determinate through fluid and mutable position, women can  
themselves articulate a set of interests and ground a feminist politics.  
(433)

### **The Role of Female in the Victorian Era**

Victorian time is mainly associated with a male-dominated, prudish society in  
which women had no rights. In fact, Victorian law laid down the woman's  
dependency on her father and on her husband. All a woman's right, including those  
over her body, possessions and offspring, were transferred from her father to her new  
husband at the wedding. A woman on her own was nothing and was only defined by  
her father or husband. The term 'married woman' indicated a woman who had no  
existence in common law apart from her husband. Actually Victorian morality was

that husband had to be protective, wife had to be submissive and children had to be obedient. Conventional wisdom held that men and women had separate “spheres” and duties, with woman’s sphere being the house, family, and self-sacrifice. The popular image for the ideal woman was “the Angel in the house ,” who was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all pure and a woman as the model of morality for men. With these angelic attributes it was her duty to be an obedient and caring wife. The husband, who worked hard in a rough world, needed peace and comfort at home. A woman’s sole concern was meant to be ensuring her husband’s well-being and the thought of a woman taking up employment was despised. Female occupation in the fields of art, literature, teaching and entertainment was at least tolerated.

### **Female Consciousness**

In order to end exploitation and subordination of women to men on the basis of gender, women movements began which have been canonized as ‘Feminism’. Feminism emerged as writing against the grain in the field of intellectual and academic exercise in the 1960s raising the manifold issues of women. Initially, its prime concern was to shed light on the social, political and culture realities of a human world that have been heavily affecting the lives of women. As a new and radical mode of political cultural and social discourse, feminism, essentially, was an avant-garde project. Feminism can be discussed as new innovation, discovery and exploration to address the problems, issues and lives of women. It exposed the plight of women in male privileged socio-economic-cultural framework. Presenting the plight, miseries, pain, exclusion, deprivation, oppression and marginalization of



women in all spheres of life declaring patriarchy as dominant factor to cause above problems in the lives of women and spreading the awareness against the dark sides of patriarchy are the performances undertaken by Feminism. In fact, tremendous awareness came in the lives of women after the feminist movement of the 1960s.

What we now call feminism came to public attention in the eighteenth century, most notably in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where she argued for equal opportunity for women based on a rational capacity common to both sexes, expressing "the wild wish to see the sex distinction confounded in society" (25). Her feminist aspirations came together with socialistic aims in the thinking of a number of utopian socialists, whose visions of socialism included not only sexual equality in the family and society at large but the end of the sexual division of labor. Wollstonecraft's "wild wish" is radical even today. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels shared these aspirations and deepened the critique of naturalistic justifications of all social hierarchies. But Marx and Engels were impatient with blueprints for a good society and focused instead on developing a theory of history, society, and social change which would be the basis for the realization of these ideals.

As a school of thought, feminism tries to dismantle the patriarchal social norms and values that are against the natural law of sexual equality, to liberate women. It is a wide-ranging complaint against the patriarchal monopoly. It focuses on economic and political equality and revolts against gender roles, stereotypes and discrimination against women based on the presuppositions that women are passive, weak and physically helpless. It studies to investigate domination of women in all fields-social, political, etc from different perspectives.

Feminism highlights the issues that the cause of women's subordination is not natural, but it is done due to the construction of the society. Women's condition is the outcome of the social and cultural construction of the society rather than predestined by God or nature. Gerda Lerner defines feminist consciousness in the following extract:

I define feminist consciousness as the awareness of women that they belong to subordinate group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but it is socially determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally they must and can provide an alternative vision of societal organization in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination. (14)

Feminists seek the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of just, social and economic order in the home, nationally and internationally. For feminists, the object is not merely to fill half the positions in the present system with women, nor to achieve equal share of power in the present unequal and unjust power structure, but to ensure the transformation of society and social relations. Feminism is not just about women becoming like men, it is about finding out what is good in both male and female ways of being and doing, and creation of alternative culture.

There are different versions of categorizations of Feminisms and feminists. Liberal feminist include all those who campaign for equal rights for women within the framework of the liberal state, arguing that the theoretical basis on which this state is built is sound but that the rights and privileges it confers must be extended to women to give them equal citizenship with men. According to Ritzer, "Contemporary

liberal feminism's explanation of gender inequality turns on the interplay of four factors: the social construction of gender, the gendered division of labour, the doctrine and the practice of public and private spheres, and patriarchal ideology" (65). An important precursor feminist critic, Virginia Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* and numerous other essays on women authors and on the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within what she called a "Patriarchal" society that have hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities (67).

Radical feminists see man's domination of women as the result of the system of patriarchy, which is independent of all other social structures—that is, it is not a product of capitalism. For radical feminists, the state is an instrument ensuring male control of women's sexuality. Although it assumes objectivity through the enactment of presumably natural laws, in practice women are raped by the state just as they are raped by men (Tong 45). As long as the state is male, meaning that its meaning systems, its mode of operations, and its underlying assumption are based in masculine power, women will be unable to overcome their subordination through state actions.

### **Rise of Feminist Awareness**

Feminism is social theory and a political movement primarily informed and fuelled by the experience of women. Inaugurated by such critical minds as Mary Wollstonecraft and Germaine Nicole de Sainte Beuve, this movement was later strengthened by Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir in the twentieth century. Simply put, feminism can be understood as a doctrine, which advocates equal rights and dignity for women. Feminism acquired a more or less concrete set of beliefs in the nineteenth century articulating the thesis that women are inherently equal to men

in every way conceivable. The world 'feminism' cannot satisfactorily be defined for all time and purposes as there are many kinds of feminism ranging from liberal to eco-feminism to radical feminism to psycho-analytic feminism. But all of them are informed by certain shared concerns, which distinguish them from other theories and movements. As a concerted social and political movement that went global, feminism got momentum in the twentieth century. The aim of this movement can be designed as spiritual as it seeks to establish a human society based on the mutual understanding and respect between the two sexes.

The multiplicity of definitions today of this movement makes it difficult to provide an all-inclusive definition. Even then, what Catherine Mackinnon means by it can be taken as generalization of this movement when she writes that a "theory is feminist to the extent it is persuaded that women have been unjustly unequal to men because of the social meaning of their bodies" (qtd. in Pateman 234). As an intellectual approach, feminism seeks to analyze how current relations between men and women are constructed by the long tradition of male domination and control at the power mechanism, and, in the light of this understanding, how the gender relations with the specific roles attributed to each gender can be challenged and changed. Feminist theories, whatever their political and philosophical affiliation, have inevitably treated the issue of the difference between men and women. An example is the sexual division of labour, which is universally present in all societies. Some tasks are, in this division, proper to men and others are proper to women. Men's work is economically rewarding and socially respectable while women's is limited in terms of yield, it is mostly domestic and low paid job without much of social and public recognition.

Feminism questions why a woman have been consigned to a subservient status in relation to men, and explains the social system controlled and constructed by men, as the cause behind women's subordination. The role of sexuality that is understood as socially mediated sexual practice is restricting and oppressing women. Because of their very birth as females, women are deprived of the very many opportunities in life which men are entitled to participate. It also studies how women's lives have changed throughout history. Also, one of its central concerns according to what women's experience is different from that of men's.

Literature created by women has been found very scarcely. In the performance art such as dramas of those times male actors played the part of the women. This was the universal plight of the women kind throughout the world. As consequence, women everywhere were rendered mute and tolerant, subservient and secondary. For all that, women were not going to tolerate the injustice forever. In fact, there were occasional voices against male domination of women. As Patricia Madoo Lengermann and Niebrugge - Brantly in their book contend, "Until the late 1700s feminist writing survived as a thin but persistent trickle of protest" (488).

As it was inevitable for their liberation from the century long suppression, females finally began to raise strong and organized voice suspecting and arguing against all sorts of social constructs and myths that consigned them to a lower-than-human status. The historical movement in the seventeenth century Europe called the Renaissance paved the way for the Age of Reason or The Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. The philosophy of utilitarianism and individualism, championed by minds such Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill respectively, underlined the importance of each individual and their aspirations. This inspired the women to claim

recognition of themselves, of their individuality. This awareness further prompted them to explore their position in the society. No sooner had they begun to explore this issue and found themselves oppressed by men than the “feminist writing became a growing tide of critical work” (488). There were several women and even some men who were instrumental to introducing feminism, which gained strength as a socio political movement in time.

## **Chapter: Three**

### **Jane's Search for Identity, Equality, Freedom and Individuality**

#### **Jane's Protest against Injustice at Gateshead**

Jane is physically and emotionally abused by her aunt and cousins at Gateshead, and she protests against them for their unjust treatment. Our spiritual individuality is just as man-made product of our genetic make-up as the colour of our skin or our eyes, which is regarded as our identity. The social climate and cultural atmosphere are our identities, however, it is the people in our lives who have the greatest influence. The novel *Jane Eyre* reveals this idea by the development of the protagonist, Jane Eyre. Jane Eyre's search for her identity, is praise-worthy, which goes rigorously throughout the novel. The novel presents the conflict between male chauvinism and the heroine's sense of individualism and self-possession. It portrays Jane's struggles to attain her own individual identity and give voice to her own desires fairly.

Jane Eyre, the protagonist of the novel, is a wonderful character. When Jane's parents died, the infant Jane is left to the care of her uncle. It is very hard to her. She spends her life miserably with her ruthless and indifferent cousins. She is unwanted burden in her aunt's home. Her aunt, Mrs. Reed, is bound by her late husband's will to take care of the young, orphan Jane. But this promise costs tender Jane, many tearful nights, frightened, agonized days and worst childhood memories forever. Although Jane now lives with the Reeds, a financially well-off family, she is still treated like a poor, working-class orphan. On one occasion her nasty cousin John picks a fight with her. Jane tries to defend herself and is locked in the terrifying "Red Room" (8) as a result. She seems almost like an hysterical child, filled with terror and

rage. She repeatedly calls her condition in life “unjust!-unjust!” (10). It is filled with bitterness. Actually it is the word Jane used for her own self-defence after she has suffered a wrong. While at Gateshead, Jane is constantly reminded of her lower-class, orphaned status. Jane’s position in the Reed household is inferior and intolerable. Even the Reeds’ servant, Miss Abbot, tells her, “you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed, because Missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them” (8).

Jane is at the mercy of the Reed family’s demands and is severely punished for anything they deem improper. Although she does possess a passionate disposition that the Reeds often use as a justification for punishment, Jane is forced into a “habitual obedience.” Therefore, she obediently listens to John as he reminds her of her insignificant, poor status: “you are a dependant, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama’s expense” (6).

Jane begins her struggle for love at Gateshead. Her temper and self-will become apparent there. She stands up for herself not only against her cousins, but also against Mrs. Reed as well. “You think I have no feeling, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I cannot live so: and you have no pity” (29). Jane’s early life at Gateshead proved to be rather traumatic period in her life. She is a social outcast in the Reeds’ home. The only peace that she finds at Gateshead is during times of voluntary solitude and while reading. Like orphans throughout English literature, she must develop an identity through the challenge of social mobility, a challenge that keeps her inferior while at Gateshead. Jane dared commit no fault. She



says, “I strove to fulfill every duty; I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaky, from morning to noon, and from noon to night” (10). Living a childhood such as Jane’s, one would expect a self-willed and rebellious personality to emerge. She adds, “I was a discord at Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there.... If they didn’t love me, in fact, as little did I love them” (10).

Her rebellion against the family that hated her fueled an inner subconscious conflict dealing with love and trust. Jane’s energetic, adventurous spirit feels great longing for acceptance and love. Another opportunity for heightening is frustrated in the interests of deeper truthfulness at the child’s (Jane’s) verbal triumph over Mrs. Reed:

I was left there alone-winner of the field. It was the hardest battle I had fought, and the first victory I had gained.... A child cannot quarrel with its elders as I had done; cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play as I had given mine; without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of reaction (30).

Jane herself expresses her surprise as the maids, Bessie and Abbot, carry her up to the red-room where she is to be punished. She utters, “I resisted all the way: a new thing for me.... I was conscious that a moment’s muting had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths”(7). Mrs. Reed tells Brocklehurst that Jane is a deceitful child, and he promises that his school, Lowood, will be just the place to make Jane repent her bad habits. Stung at hearing herself called a liar, Jane lashes out at Mrs. Reed. “I will never call you aunt again as long as I live”, she cries. “I will never come to see you when I am grown up .... People think you are a good woman, but you are

bad; hard-hearted. You are deceitful!” (29). This outburst leaves Jane feeling a sense of triumph. Jane’s longing of finding amicability in her aunt’s home remains an unfulfilled desire for ultimately her aunt gets rid of her. She sends her far away to a charitable institution, Lowood. Jane also expresses her desire to leave them through her yelling avowal of hatred for each of her cousins.

### **Jane’s Rebellious Expression at Lowood**

Treated with disrespect and lack of love, Jane began her journey, quest for love and freedom. Her rebellion against the family that hated her fueled an inner subconscious conflict dealing with love and trust. She finally reaches Lowood Institution where she finds to some extent relief despite its pitiable state of affairs. It is here, where Jane meets her first true friend Helen Burns. At the orphanage, Jane forms a passionate attachment to Helen. Her life turns a new chapter for her. Immaculate friendships follow which resume her trust and faith in life. Helen assumes a sisterly like role and teaches Jane love in the form of religion. “Read the New Testament”, Helen instructed Jane, “love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you” (49). Jane does not comprehend the act of loving her enemies. Then she denies, “Then I should love Mrs. Reed, which I cannot do; I should bless her son John, which is impossible” (49). Her lack of comprehension stems from her childhood and the lack of love she received. Never in her childhood did she get the attention and love that a child deserves.

In Jane’s eyes her self-worth would severely diminish if she were to be of someone who did not love her. At Lowood, she meets new people, gets acceptance, and receives love for what she is. Helen explains to Jane how Miss Scatcherd dislikes Helen’s “cast of character” (45) and the deep impression the injustice of an enemy

makes on her heart. While one of Jane's teachers, Miss Scatcherd, is unpleasant, particularly in her harsh treatment of Helen Burns, Jane disagrees strongly with such meek tolerance of injustice and argues that this attitude only encourages people like Miss Scatcherd who enjoys picking on the weak. "When we are struck at without a reason", Jane argues, "we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should-so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again" (48). But even Jane, the rebel, does not mean to say that she would actually hit a teacher. She just means that she would find some way to fight back against unfair treatment or injustice.

Jane stands against the injustice as well as hypocrisy. However, she is attacked and humiliated time and again. Ultimately she bursts into tears when she is accused as a liar by Mr. Brocklehurst in the public. Helen and Miss Temple show the first hope of love and affection for Jane at that time and Helen's comfort in injustice reaches her as from another world. She remembers Helen's compassion to her in this way:

... She chafed my fingers gently to warm them, and went on: If all the world hate you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you and absolved you from guilt, you would not be without friends. No; I know ... if others don't love me, I would rather die than live—I can not bear to be solitary and hated, Helen....(58-59)

Jane is able to gain strength from Helen's faith. It is this faith that she attains that guides Jane through her life and ultimately leads to her happiness. Her words and emotions reveal the great passion of her personality, and the drama of her imagination. Another character that has a significant influence in Jane's life at Lowood is Miss Evans, the superintendent. Miss Evans is primarily the first person in

Jane's life that treats Jane with justice and confidence in her ability to "make good". In her dealings with Miss Evans and the scolding she receives from Miss Evans, Jane puts Helen's lessons to use. She tries to accept her scolding as if it had some higher purpose, though she is hurt inside when she is scolded. Her experiences at Lowood make her a much stronger self-willed person, though they also contribute to her decrease in rebelliousness. Jane's need for love is so great in the novel.

### **Jane's Conflict with Rochester**

There is conflict between Jane and Rochester as regards to love and marriage, and she rejects him which is a victory of her principle over her passion. In the novel *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Bronte discusses various problems concerning marriage which especially affect the woman and she unfolds her idealistic view of marriage. This study will concentrate on Jane Eyre's conflicting relationship with the two male figures, which raise important issues of the marriage debate such as the double standard of morality, divorce and the right of the married woman. The solution to the conflicts and the basis of a harmonious male-female relationship which are offered in the novel, will be examined and subsequently evaluated. This study tends to trace out a brief outline of the situation women were in the Victorian era and of Bronte's attitude towards love and marriage.

No passage of life is free from hardships, toils and challenges. The classical novel, *Jane Eyre*, is indeed a tale of passionate love between two individuals belonging to entirely contrasting backgrounds. Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester are the two major characters of the novel, having opposite personalities and experience. Bronte renders majestic illumination upon the secret ways of infinitely merciful

Divine powers, through her words in the novel. Their distinctive nature creates the problem of difficulties in the relationship between Jane and Rochester.

There is dynamism in Jane's quest for her identity. Staying at Lowood for ten years, eight years as a student and two as a teacher, she eventually leaves Lowood and ventures to Thornfield Hall where she gains the position of governess. Her life as a governess at Thornfield begins a new phase of much emotional struggle and growth for her. Mr. Rochester, the mysterious owner of Thornfield, is not there by the time Jane arrives at Thornfield. Mrs. Fairfax explains vaguely that he is a "rather peculiar" (91) man who spends much of his time travelling and his family has a history of extreme and violent behaviour. At Thornfield, Jane's job is to teach Mr. Rochester's ward, Adele. Jane is satisfied with her work, but she finds the quiet life there rather boring. The occupation of Adele keeps Jane busy enough during the day, but when evening sets, contemplation rules her mind and introduces sensations and emotions that are strange to her. Her imagination is constantly churning with dreams of adventure in far away places. "It is vain to say that human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility," Jane tells us, "they must have action; and they will make it if they can not find it" (95). This expression shows the zeal and zest of Jane which leads, in her opinion, all human beings to success.

One evening a few months after her arrival at Thornfield, Jane is alone watching moon rise when she perceives a horse approaching. It calls to her mind the story Bessie once told her of a spirit called a Gytrash, which disguises itself as a mule, dog, or horse to frighten "belated travelers" (97). Oddly enough, a dog then appears as well. Once she realizes that the horse has a rider, the uncanny moment ceases. Just after the horse passes her, it slips on a patch of ice, and its rider tumbles

to the ground. Jane helps the man rise to his feet and introduces herself to him. She observes that he has a dark face, stern features, and a heavy brow. He is not quite middle-aged. Upon reentering Thornfield, Jane goes to Mrs. Fairfax's room and sees the same dog—Pilot—resting happily in front of the fire at Thornfield, that she finds out the stranger was none other than Mr. Rochester himself. This first encounter with Mr. Rochester seems to justify Mrs. Fairfax's description of him as peculiar because he does not introduce himself to Jane right away.

The comfort of her new-found life is beyond her expectations while Mr. Rochester continues to mystify her in every encounter. The beginnings with Mr. Rochester are unpleasant; his tone is ruthless and his intentions unclear. "You never felt jealousy, did you, Miss Eyre? Of course not; I need not ask you; because you never felt love"(124). This is the manner in which he speaks to her. "Your soul sleeps; the shock is yet to be given which shall awaken it...." (124). But over a long period the moody, inscrutable Rochester confides in Jane and her in him. The two form an unlikely friendship and eventually fall in love. Jane's need for love comes to the fore, as does her passionate nature. A dark, gothic figure, Rochester also has a heart filled with the hope of true love and future happiness with Jane. But it has just been irony that he has brought all his misery, past and future, on himself.

Jane hardly sees Rochester when he is occupied with business and his gentlemen friends from the neighbourhood. One day, as Jane and Rochester walk together on the grounds of the mansion, Rochester confesses that he had a long affair with Adele's mother, Celine Varens. When he discovered that Celine was engaged in relations with another man, Rochester ended the relationship. He has always denied

Celine's claim that Adele is his daughter, but when she was abandoned by her mother, Rochester brought Adele to England.

Jane lies awake brooding about the strange insights she has gained into her employer's past. In the middle of the night, she hears a "demonic laugh"(129) coming from right outside her bedroom. She hears a door opening and hurries out of her room and she finds Rochester's bed curtains in fire. Jane douses the bed with water and saves Rochester's life. Then Rochester says mysteriously, "I have found it all out, it is just as I thought" (131). He inquires whether Jane has ever heard the eerie laughter before, and she answers that she has heard Grace Poole laugh in the same way. "Just so. Grace Poole—you have guessed it" (132), Rochester confirms. He thanks Jane for saving his life and tells the details of the night's events. When Jane starts to go back to her room, Rochester hints in roundabout way that she might like to stay and comfort him. She ignores the suggestion, but secretly she is thrilled by this evidence of Rochester's interest in her. She is already well on her way to falling in love. She realizes that she is beginning to have feelings for Rochester and is disappointed that he will be away from Thornfield for several days. He leaves to attend a party where he will be in the company of Blanche Ingram, a beautiful lady.

Mrs. Fairfax mentions that among the guests will be Miss Blanche Ingram, a raven-haired beauty of twenty-five, who was the "belle of the evening" (138) at a party given at Thornfield six years ago. She and Mr. Rochester sang a duet together. This casual conversation throws Jane into turmoil of jealousy. Jane evaluates herself its effect to her: "That a greater fool than Jane Eyre had never breathed the breath of life... swallowed poison as if it were nectar" (140).

Jane is dismayed after learning that Rochester may choose to depart for continental Europe without returning to Thornfield. According to Mrs. Fairfax, he could be gone for more than a year. Mr. Rochester is prone to moodiness. He again arrives at Thornfield with a large group of guests. Jane is forced to join the house party. Blanche Ingram and her mother are among the party's members who treat Jane with disdain and cruelty. Blanche Ingram flirts outrageously with Mr. Rochester. She launches into a speech on the relative importance of beauty in men and women, concluding confidently that "an ugly woman is a blot on the face of creation" (157). This expression severely pinches in the heart of Jane for she is just a plain governess. Jane's situation manifests the uncomfortable position of governesses in the novel. The potential relationship between Jane and Rochester is in crisis. Blanche's presence, which threatens the possibility of a union between Jane and Rochester, adds tension. This is one which is responsible to cause the difficulty in the relationship between Jane and Rochester. Rochester's enticement with Blanche Ingram is due to only his physical passion. He is not sincere in morality.

Jane's true struggle in life, surpassing her horrific circumstances at her aunt, Mrs. Reed's and Lowood School both, starts the moment she falls in love with Mr. Rochester. The mental torment that this tiny creature endures at the hands of twisted fate test her to her soft core. All is not as it seems at Thornfield. There is a strange, ominous woman servant, Grace Poole, who lives and works in an attic room. She keeps to herself and is rarely seen. From the first, however, Jane has sensed bizarre happenings at night, when everyone is asleep. There are wild cries along with violent attempts on Rochester's life by a seemingly unknown person. Jane wonders why no



one investigates Mrs. Poole. Then a strange man visits Thornfield and mysteriously disappears with Mr. Rochester. Late that night Jane is asked to sit with the man while the lord of the house seeks a doctor's help. The man has been seriously wounded and is weak from loss of blood. He leaves by coach, in a sorry state, first thing in the morning. Jane's questions are not answered directly. Jane is enough to suspect with all these happenings. Though Rochester loves and wants to marry Jane, he does not tell her the truth about him beforehand. In this sense, he is mysterious and fraudulent.

The day before the wedding, Mr. Rochester has been away overnight on business, visiting some farms he owns. On his return, he tells Jane that they will be leaving on their wedding trip one hour after the ceremony. There must be something secret after his proposal for hasty departure. Jane also tells Rochester that on the previous night she suffered a terrible nightmare. Thornfield Hall was in ruins, and she was running away from it carrying a baby in her arms. Similarly, she awakened to find a strange woman in her room. The woman was "large and tall, with disheveled black hair and a horrible, discolored face—blotchy skin, swollen lips, and bloodshot eyes" (250). As Jane watched in fear, this strange woman placed Jane's wedding veil over her own head, studied herself in the mirror, and then angrily ripped the veil into two parts and trampled them underfoot. Then she came to Jane's bed and leaned over to stare at her.

Jane swears that she never saw this horrible-looking woman who reminded her of something unreal—of "that foul German Spectre—the Vampyre" (250). But Rochester tells Jane that she must be imagining things. He again promises that after he and Jane have been married for "a year and a day" he will explain why he continues to keep "such a woman" (251) in his house. This expression brings enough

ground for dark suspicion and mystery to Jane. It is a great threat and mental terror in Jane's life.

It is the day of the wedding, Jane and Rochester have planned a private wedding, with no guests or attendants. But as they arrive at the small country church, Jane notes a pair of strangers reading the headstones in the churchyard cemetery. The ceremony begins and when the minister asks, "Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?" (255). One of the strangers answers: "The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment" (255). Rochester attempts to proceed with the ceremony, but the stranger explains that Rochester is already married fifteen years earlier to a Miss Bertha Mason of Spanish Town, Jamaica—Mr. Mason's sister! The speaker explains that he is a solicitor from London, and he introduces himself as Mr. Briggs. And the other man emerges from the shadows to reveal that he is Mr. Richard Mason. Rochester ultimately confesses that his wife is alive and that in marrying Jane he would have been knowingly taking a second wife. No one in the community knows of his wife because she is mad, and Rochester keeps her locked away under the care of Grace Poole. But he also promises them all that Jane is completely ignorant of Bertha's existence. Mr. Rochester insists the crowd to come to Thornfield where they witness the insane Bertha Mason scurrying around on all fours and growling like an animal. "That is my wife", he tells his visitors bitterly. "This is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know" (259).

After the wedding crowd disperses, Jane locks herself in her room and plunges into an inexpressible grief. She is devastated—"a cold, solitary girl again" (261) who sees all her hopes for the future in ruins. However, even in despair, Jane cannot bring herself to put the blame on Rochester. "I would not say that he betrayed

me” (261), she comments. Her greatest fear, in fact, is that Rochester did not really love her after all, and that he only chose her because he dared not try to make an illegal marriage with a woman who was his social equal.

As Jane knows about Rochester’s insane wife Bertha Mason, she does not like to stay at Thornfield and she decides to leave Thornfield and Rochester forever. But Rochester still tells Jane to stay there. He then offers her a new proposal to leave England with him for the south of France, where they will live together as husband and wife. Jane refuses, explaining that no matter how Rochester chooses to view the situation, she will never be more than a mistress to him while Bertha is alive. It is, in fact one of the most shocking, desperate and the greatest difficulties to Jane in keeping the relationship with Mr. Rochester. Rochester’s efforts to make Jane his mistress is just a fantasy and a kind of nobleman’s lust for passion, specifically physical passion. Rochester says, “Every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own: in pain and sickness it would still be dear”(266).

The intensity of the pressure which Rochester puts upon Jane is matched, not by the fear of her, but by a responsiveness which she barely masters: “the crisis was perilous; but not without its charm...”(267) she is “tortured by a sense of remorse at thus hurting his feelings”(267); at the moment of decision “ a hand of fiery iron grasped my vitals...blackness, burning!...my intolerable duty” (279); she leaves in “despair”(282); and after she has left, she says, “I longed to be his; I panted to return...” (283) and for the victory of principle “I abhorred myself... I was hateful in my own eyes” (284).

Her passion for Rochester is all consuming. However, it is not the only force that governs her life. Her fear of losing her autonomy motivates her refusal of

Rochester's marriage proposal. Jane believes that marrying Rochester would mean compromising her faith in God as well as her self-worth and sacrificing her own integrity for the sake of emotional gratification. Jane is not willing to love without marriage and become his mistress. Her rejection poses a moral victory; a good woman could not survive a loss of virtue nor live without self-respect.

Jane's relation with Mr. Rochester as wife and husband would be very problematic, unlawful and sinful as well in the sense that a man could not divorce an insane wife as per the law of England at that time. Rochester's case is also the same. He can neither divorce his insane wife, Bertha Mason, lawfully nor can forsake Jane due to his passion for her. Because of his impulsive passion, he entraps himself in an unfulfilling marriage. He thought nothing of his duty and the consequence of this was. He becomes the pride owner of a marriage based entirely on passion. The role of passion in Rochester's marriage with Bertha can apparently be seen in the novel. He does nothing to either restrain or question his passion. His strong passionate nature was laid bare when his marriage with Jane was interrupted so dramatically. Then Jane prepares to leave Thornfield in anguish. She tells Rochester, "I must leave you and Thornfield for my whole life" (268). Mr. Rochester admits and says, "Of course: I told you you should... You shall yet be my wife: I am not married. You shall be Mrs. Rochester—both virtually and nominally" (268).

As Jane is not willing to be his mistress for she has already noticed about Rochester's previous mad wife who is still alive. He tries to persuade Jane and tells her of the circumstances of his marriage with Bertha that he was sent to Jamaica "to espouse a bride already courted"(269) for him. Bertha was beautiful, and although she and Rochester spent hardly any time alone, the stimulated, dazzled, and ignorant

youth believed himself to be in love and agreed to the marriage. Rochester confesses, “All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated; my senses were excited.... I thought I loved her” (269). He extremely seethes with passion.

Rochester makes confession about his past after his secrecy was revealed. When his marriage with Bertha turned into deception, he drifted around the continent from one city to the next, always in search of “a good and intelligent woman”(274) whom he could love. He had three previous mistresses and he was always disappointed with them, because they were, as he puts it “the next worse thing to, buying a slave” (275). Mr. Rochester is, in fact, not aware about the duties and responsibilities as well as morality but he is blind with the burning passion. Consequently, he conceals his secret to Jane at Thornfield and tries to persuade her to marry with him even after their wedding was devastated.

Jane possesses a sense of her self-worth and dignity, a commitment to justice and principle, a trust in God, and a passionate disposition. Jane fights for her individuality and refuses to be reduced to some mere “machine”. She will not act in the manner that “custom” or “conventionalities” (223) would deem her to act, but through her own free will. She is against gender disparity, social conformity and conventional morality. She struggles for the issue of sexual equality, independence and her own identity. Jane proclaims to Rochester that she has as much soul as him and just full as heart. Showing that as a woman she is no different from him, and thus should be treated no differently. Jane asks Rochester in this context:

Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am automation? A machine without feelings? ...you think wrong! - I

have as much soul as you,- and full as much heart!... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;--is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,--as we are! (223).

The above expression is one for the equality of the sexes. It is the portrait of Jane's fight for her individuality and her refusal for submission. The end of this quotation explicitly states that when they both die they will stand at God's feet equal as they are now. When Rochester asks who will care if she breaks the conventional rules, she answers: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself " (280). Her conscience tells her that she will respect herself all the more if she bears her suffering alone and does what she believes to be right.

Jane feels very painful, awkward and desolate that her tender mind suffers a sensitive blow. The ill social custom, her broken trust and an injured esteem make Jane leave Thornfield at last. There is obvious conflict between Jane and Rochester in their ideology. It means Rochester possesses the human intense feeling-passion for love and Jane possesses the human reason faculty-love with morality and legality. So, there is conflict between passion for love and love for legal love. Due to different ideology the difficulty arises in the relationship between Jane and Rochester.

### **Jane's Conflict with St John Rivers**

Life itself is a struggle. People struggle for their existence, for individual freedom and identity. There is struggle between Jane Eyre and St. John Rivers claiming the superiority of their own principles. They are both restless and seeking

the greater power that rules them; for St. John it is reason or judgement, for Jane it is passion. St John thinks that Jane(a female) is a subordinate to him(a male), not equal.

Jane is a dynamic character in the novel who frequently moves from one place to another in search of her own identity. She does not want to forsake her self-esteem and morality for the sake of worldly passion. Though she is passionate for Rochester's love, she flees Thornfield and Rochester when his dark secret is revealed. Despite her genuine love for him, she cannot compromise her integrity by relegating herself to the status of a mistress. After leaving Thornfield Jane faces several difficulties and pains. She is destitute, begs and is near death almost for three days. Collapsing on the door step of a house in anguish and weakness, Jane cries, "I can but die, and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence" (196). A voice answers, "All men must die, but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want" (296). The voice belongs to St. John Rivers who brings Jane into the house.

St. John Rivers is a young clergyman who has got two sisters, Mary and Diana. Jane becomes a close friend to Mary and Diana, but St. John is too reserved for her to relate to. Later St. John offers her a post as school mistress in Morton, which she gladly accepts for her independence. But St. John predicts that Jane will not stay in Morton very long. You "impassioned" (315), he tells Jane "Human affections and sympathies have a most powerful hold on you" (315). He confesses that even he, a Christian minister, has felt restless and longed to escape the sleepy village of Morton. Jane hardly knows what to think of this confession.

At Morton, the wealthy heiress Rosamond Oliver provides Jane with a cottage to live. Jane begins teaching but she finds the work degrading and disappointing. St.

John visits Jane's modest cottage and encourages to stay with the job. He tells her that it is possible to conquer one's natural desires through will-power, and to "turn the bent of one's own nature" (319). By way of illustration, St. John confides that he has recently passed through a crisis of his own. He was longing for a career in literature, politics, the army-anything that would offer more excitement than his religious duties. But after much soul searching, he has decided that his restlessness was a message from God, calling him to the life of "good missionary" (320). He further adds that he has only "one last conflict with human weakness" (320) to overcome before he is ready to leave for the east. The beautiful Rosamond Oliver then appears, interrupting St. John and Jane's conversation. From their interaction, Jane believes that Rosamond and St. John are in love. She continues to pay attention to the relationship between St. John and Rosamond, who often visits the school when she knows that St. John is there. Jane proposes him to marry Rosamond so that he could make himself happy, and by putting Rosamond's money to accomplish as much as he would in a lifetime of missionary work.

St. John admits that he loves Rosamond "wildly-with all the intensity of a first passion" (330), but he is also convinced that he would soon be sorry if he married her. He says that Rosamond would not make "a good missionary's wife" (331). He explains that he refuses to allow worldly affection to interfere with his holy duties. He decides not to marry Rosamond based on his passion for her. He completely shuns his passion, the opposite extreme of Rochester. Meanwhile, Rosamond Oliver has finally given up St. John and announced her engagement with another man. St. John pretends to be happy about this news. He tells Jane that giving up Rosamond was a victory over his sensual desires. He says, "You see Jane, the battle is fought and the victory



won. The event of the conflict is decisive: my way is now clear; I thank God for it! (350).”

St. John discovers Jane’s true identity, and astounds her by showing her a letter stating that her uncle John Eyre has died and left her his entire fortune of twenty thousand pounds. When Jane questions him further, St. John reveals that John Eyre was also his uncle as Jane’s. Jane, overjoyed by finding her family, insists on sharing the money equally with her cousins. Now, she is independent economically which she always has sought for. St. John asks Jane to give up her study of German and instead to learn “Hindustani” (351) with him the language he is learning to prepare for missionary work in India. He exerts a greater and greater influence on Jane, his power over her is almost uncanny. Although a woman was typically required to submit to a man’s orders in Victorian society, Jane asserts her feelings, even to her domineering cousin, St. John Rivers. When he pleads Jane to marry him so that he will have a companion in his mission to India, Jane replies “my sense directed me only to the fact that we did not love each other as man and wife should: and therefore it inferred we ought to not marry” (359). Jane does not allow male dominance to compel her to marry against her own will.

St. John tells her plainly that he is offering a loveless marriage. “I claim you-not for my pleasure”, he says, “but for my sovereign’s service” (356). Although Jane’s femininity makes her inferior in society to River’s masculine strength in the battle of the sexes, Jane, though self-confessedly little, plain and undistinguished in talents will not accept the position of the inferior. Jane’s mind struggles to come to a decision, and after some time she tells him that she is ready to accompany him as his helper, but not as his wife. He does not love her but wants her as a wife only to

promote his duty as a missionary, if she sincerely wishes to do service. But she cannot consent to a marriage without love. St. John has sadistic tendencies. He tells Jane that if she does not marry him, God will regard her going to India as a “mutilated sacrifice” (359).

Before leaving Jane, St. John quotes a line from a poem by Sir Walter Scott: “looked to river, looked to hill (362).” This reminds us that Jane is torn between St. John, whose last name is Rivers and Mr. Rochester, whose mansion Thornfield is set on hilly ground. Rochester offered Jane love which is a passionate love before marriage whereas St John offers marriage, and with it the useful and socially respectable position of a missionary’s wife, but it is an offer made without love.

St John hopes to get Jane to change her mind, but his coldness and air of repressed hostility only make Jane more determined to refuse him. When St. John repeats his proposal of marriage, Jane recognizes that not only does St. John not love her-he subconsciously wants to make her suffer, as he has suffered in giving up everything to follow what he believes is God’s will. “You almost hate me”, Jane tells him accusingly. “If I was to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now” (365). St John still does not give up, and Jane repeats her offer to go to India as his assistant. He does not even pretend to be in love with Jane and he is insulted by her answer. Turning “lividly pale” (366), he remarks that he is not interested in having a “female curate” (366). He wants a wife. However, he offers to arrange for Jane to go out to India as a married couple. Jane says no. She only considers going to India in the first place out of a “sisterly” (366) desire to help him, and she reminds him that she feels no duty to go with strangers.

St John insists Jane to ignore her feelings and submit to his powerful conception of necessary moral duty. Jane remains true to herself only with great difficulty. In declining St. John's proposal Jane escapes another threat to her freedom and her sense of self. Jane considers his proposal leads her to an important realization about herself. Part of the reason she fled Thornfield was that she feared becoming a slave to her own passion and sacrificing her principles. By coming so close to marrying St. John and refusing to marry him, she demonstrates her ability to sacrifice passion altogether and devote her-self wholly to principle. Moreover, she now appreciates more than ever what Rochester offered her. Having found herself on the threshold of a loveless marriage, she understands fully the importance of following not only her mind but also her heart. What she would not endure is despotic mastery by any man. It is St. John's tendency to despotism that causes her to resist his ambitions to make her his wife.

A disciplined and educated missionary, St. John is focused on his own devotion and remains static throughout the novel. In Jane's description, St John is "compressed, condensed and controlled" (356). His ambition drives him and does not believe in the importance of revealing emotions. As Jane comes to know him, she senses that, like her, he seems to be at peace. They are both restless and seeking the greater power that reigns them. It is male chauvinism and his own superiority which St. John possesses and always wants to impose on others and it is equality, freedom and individuality which Jane seeks. St. John's moral beliefs suggest that he fears his own sexuality and views female sexuality as a threat to his purity of vision. It is his reason that he believes upon, and ,instead of asking Rosamond to marry him, he feels

that it is Jane who would be the more appropriate wife to accompany him in his missionary work.

He attempts to succeed where Brocklehurst failed and render Jane submissive; his selective praise of her as “docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and very gentle” (357), expresses his desire to subdue her to his needs. St. John has taught Jane to act with reason. When he proposes her to go to India with him as his wife, it is the better judgement that tells her that “he prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon, and that is all” (358). She realizes that he could never love her the way she needs to be loved.

St John represents a life of servitude and moral ambition. He is a clergyman who reflects the ideas of duty and spirituality. He takes a perverse pleasure in torturing himself. He refuses to allow worldly affection to interfere with his holy duties. Jane has only known of a life serving others. Jane’s experience of a life of servitude is only “what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough; I tired of the routine... I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer...” (73). It is the responsibilities of servitude that suffocate her and constraint her. Her anger at St. John’s demand that she should sacrifice all her desires to his missionary ambition enables her to see him clearly for the first time and gives her the strength to refuse him. Jane’s “human affections and sympathies” take a “most power of her”(315) and she knows without a doubt that she cannot live if she is forced to stifle her passionate heart.

It is in her nature to love wholly and because of the antagonistic relationship between Jane and St. John that she is able to become aware of the intensity of her love for Rochester and allow to complete her soul. When St. John continues to give

pressure Jane to marry him, she concludes that “as his curate, his comrade, all would be right.... But as his wife—at his side always restrained, and always checked ....This would be unendurable” (360-61). Marrying St. John out of love would be the right thing to do in the eyes of God, but it would not make her happy.

### **Jane’s Decision to Marry Mr. Rochester**

Ultimately, Jane decides to marry Mr. Rochester which gives the solution to her inner conflict and she fulfils her desire for passionate love and self-possession. The development of Jane Eyre’s character is central to the novel. From the beginning, Jane possesses a sense of her self-worth and dignity, a commitment to justice and principle, a trust in God, and a passionate disposition. Her integrity is continually tested over the course of the novel, and she has to learn to balance the frequently conflicting aspects of herself so as to find contentment. In her search for freedom, Jane also struggles with the question of what type of freedom she wants. While Rochester initially offers Jane a chance to liberate her passions, Jane comes to realize that such freedom could also mean enslavement—by living as Rochester’s mistress, she would be sacrificing her dignity and integrity for the sake of her feelings or passions.

St. John Rivers offers Jane another kind of freedom: the freedom to act unreservedly on her principles. He opens to Jane the possibility of exercising her talents fully by working and living with him in India. Jane eventually realizes that this freedom would also constitute a form of imprisonment, because she would be forced to keep her true feelings and her true passions always in check.

Throughout the novel, Jane struggles to find the right balance between moral duty and earthly pleasure, between obligations to her spirit and attention to her body.

Jane is in a long journey in search of love, freedom, individuality and equality in her life. It is that love which she seeks that would make her happy. Thus continuing on her journey, she returns to Thornfield and finds it burnt to the ground. She is reunited with her true love Mr. Rochester. Jane is able to go back to Rochester due to the fact that Bertha had died in the fire. Jane does what pleases her and gets married to Rochester. She ends her journey finding what she longed for her whole life: true love and happiness. Growing up in the Victorian era, Jane's views were very conventional. Her childhood particularly influenced this conventionality.

She seeks love because she was not loved and every "human must be loved and love something" (362) in order to live a fulfilling life. Jane rejects Rochester's love earlier because it would violate her moral standards, but in the end she ends up happily in love with him. She declares "I am independent sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (385). By garnering a substantial inheritance through her Uncle Reed and running a charity school in Morton, Jane gained independence from male subsidization. She voluntarily lives with Rochester, catering to his needs, instead of depending on a man for her needs.

Jane refuses to become Mr. Rochester's paramour because of her "impassioned self-respect and moral conviction" (284). She rejects St. John Rivers' Puritanism as much as the libertine aspects of Mr. Rochester's character. Instead she works out a morality expressed in love, independence, and forgiveness. She despises the hypocritical Puritanism of Mr. Brocklehurst, and sees the deficiencies in St. John Rivers' detached devotion to his Christian duty. As a child she partly admires Helen Burns' turning the other cheek, which helps her to forgive Aunt Reed and the Reed cousins. Throughout the work, Bronte suggests that a life that is not lived

passionately is not lived fully. Jane undoubtedly is the central passionate character; her nature is shot through with passion. She refuses to live by Mrs. Reed's rules, which would restrict all passion.

Jane realizes that the absence of love between herself and St. John would make their marriage a living death. Significantly, however, it is not the only force that governs her life. She leaves Rochester because her moral reason tells her that it would be wrong to live with him as his mistress: "Laws and principles are not for the time when there is no temptation", she tells Rochester; "they are for such moments as this when body and soul rise against their rigor" (280). St. John's marriage proposal to Jane has no passion behind it; rather, he regards marriage as a business arrangement; with Jane as his potential junior partner in his missionary work. His lack of passion contrasts sharply with Rochester's passionate love.

An important part of the decision to embark on the journey of marriage is the human beings natural act of making a judgement and resolution upon physical appearance. Jane Eyre is in a sort of intermediate position between two main characters, Mr. Rochester and St. John, who hold different personalities. Throughout the course of the novel, the contrast between Mr. Rochester and St. John becomes more eminent, putting forth the arduous decision of which man she should marry. She has such an inner conflict within herself. She finally gets the solution to her inner conflict. She makes the decision through her attraction to the men's physical appearance, their intellectual or emotional stride, and what effect and relation they have to Jane.

The physical appearance of Mr. Rochester and St. John are apparently shown to be quite different. At Jane's first meeting with Rochester, she observes that "he had

a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow” (98). She views Rochester to be cold in appearance. However, once the light of the fire illuminates his face she sees past his “not-so-handsome” (114) features. Upon further observation in the novel it can be unveiled that Rochester possesses the warmth of fire within. On first glance upon the saintly St. John it is inevitable to say that he is very handsome. St. John “was young” (304) unlike Rochester. He was “tall, slender; his face riveted the eye... like a Greek face, very pure in Outline” (305). It can be stereotyped that when making a decision of matrimonial consequence, one will first focus on the physical appearance of a probable spouse. Based upon Jane’s personal view she has a “reverence and homage for beauty, elegance, gallantry and fascination” (99).

From this one can think that Jane prefers St. John’s “pure” features compared to Rochester’s “stern” features. Yet, Jane “instinctively knows” (99) that those with beauty and elegance could never “have sympathy with anything” (99) inside herself. She goes on to explain that she should shun them and anything “bright and antipathetic” (99), which introduces the possibility that St. John may be categorized into such a description. Looks are not what they seem to be, suggesting that there is more than the physical appearance of these two men being taken into consideration.

Another significant quality to be observed before a decision about matrimonial matters is the characteristics of a person, usually shown in the personality. Part of the personality is how one acts with the emotion of affection. Jane experiences two different types of affection from St. John and Rochester. Rochester, who is very much associated with fire, seems to have a fever for lust, on one level; this “fire” is the Romantic fire of passion that eventually seizes Rochester and Jane. His physical description is that of being dark in complexion, perhaps symbolizing that



he has been burnt by his passions. His passion can also be seen in his figure with the “strange fire in his look” (254) and “with his flaming and flashing eyes” (254), which symbolizes that he seeks passion. On the contrary, St. John’s eyes are “large and blue” (305), representing endless depths of ice. Even in Jane’s observation of him being “a statue instead of a man” (305) shows what ability St. John has to show or even hold passion. A statue is not living and not feeling; therefore, it cannot feel passion. In spite of his gentle looks, Jane cannot help sensing that there is something “restless, or hard, or eager” (344) in St. John’s nature.

St. John separates himself from the world including the strong emotion of passion to fulfill his “holy duty” (355). It can be noted that Rochester does in fact possess the love of passion that is expressed through the symbolism of fire. St. John, however, seems to be devoid of the fiery heart of passion. Jane makes a note of his “coldness” (339) when she felt as if she had “fallen under a freezing spell” (352) cast by St. John. She knows that “the intimacy” (353) she felt with Rochester will never “extend to St. John” (353).

Jane is in a transitional position between St. John and Rochester. She is more frequently associated with water, but is nevertheless not immobile as ice, and is most of the time life enhancing. Fire cannot scorch water, yet ice can freeze water. From this reasoning it can be determined that Jane will not be affected negatively by Rochester’s passion, but with St. John. She will surely have her “inner flame” (356) extinguished; the rushing waters of her soul frozen and immobilized. Rochester makes note of Jane’s need of fire, as well as her inner flame: “You are cold, because you are alone; no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you” (172). Rochester knows of Jane’s need for fire in her life, even if she does not yet realize it. This St.

John does not know. In her life, Jane knows that “as his wife” she will always be “restrained, and always checked” (361), which does not give her the independence and identity that she seeks. She further explains that she will be “forced to keep the fire” of her nature “continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—this would be unendurable” (361). She realizes that St. John will not love her, and that he will destroy her spirit if she chooses to marry him.

Jane thinks that we should take care of our duties before we are married but the final decision should be based entirely on passion. This is apparent when she comes about her marriage decision with Rochester. She has inner conflict which is seeking its way out. She initially turns down her marriage with Rochester because she knows she needs to take care of her duties. She goes out and proves herself and later shows to others that she does not need Rochester and can survive physically without him. Jane goes out to prove that Rochester has no duty to her. The fear of losing her autonomy motivates her for the refusal of Rochester’s marriage proposal. Jane believes that “marrying” Rochester while he remains legally tied to Bertha would mean rendering herself a mistress and sacrificing her own integrity for the sake of emotional gratification. So when she has cleared her conscience of any fear of a marriage based on duty, she decides to marry Rochester. She does this for the sole reason that she can now indulge entirely in her passion with no recourse.

With Rochester at her side, she is much at ease. Jane comes to understand that she “was with an equal” (360) when she was in the presence of Rochester. The marriage can be done between equals. Jane says: “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine.... We are precisely suited in character—perfect concord is the result”

(399). Her quest for love was turbulent, at the end Jane found the love of which she set out for. Although fire and water are opposite in nature they well coincide to maintain a delicate balance in nature, as is true with Jane and Rochester. As her husband, Rochester will continually feed the fire of soul and not let it die. His fire fascinates her and gives her a new meaning for life. At the same time, Jane will refresh Rochester, as water is usually a symbolism for cleanliness. She makes a wise decision in choosing to marry Rochester. There is true love between them. With him she can grow and be unrestrained, which is unlikely to have happened had she chosen to marry St. John. With St. John, she found ice and a stone wall, where inside there is not the warmth of passion at all. In Rochester she found the fire that she would keep her flame burning through the rest of her life and she got the solution to her inner conflict.

## Chapter: Four

### **Jane's Establishment of her Identity, Equality and Freedom**

The argument presented above condense into the point that the novel, *Jane Eyre* has well-served Jane Eyre's search for identity, freedom, equality and individuality along with her protest against the male chauvinism, social conformity, social hypocrisy, injustice, inequality and conventional morality. The emotional agony that the main character experiences throughout the novel stem from the loss of loved ones, the unjust treatment received in childhood and financial hardships. To fill these voids, Jane longs for love. On its most simple and obvious level, *Jane Eyre* is a love story. The love between the orphaned and initially impoverished Jane and the wealthy but tormented Rochester is at its heart. The obstacles to the fulfillment of this love provide the main dramatic conflict in the work.

The novel explores other types of love as well. Helen Burns, for instance, exemplifies the selfless love of friend. We also see some of the consequences of the absence of love, as in the relationship between Jane and Mrs. Reed, in the selfish relations among the Reed children, and in the mocking marriage of Rochester and Bertha. Jane realizes that the absence of love between herself and St. John Rivers would make their marriage a living death too.

Throughout the work, Bronte suggests that a life that is not lived passionately is not lived fully. Jane undoubtedly is the central passionate character; her nature is shot through with passion. Jane rejects affection at some point though it is that which she seeks. Her painful childhood experiences create an emotional centre derived from this pain. Though Jane views love as consuming, it is not of high priority in her life. She does not accept it at the cost of her moral principle—her liberty. She accepts the

fact that she will probably live her life in loneliness. At the Reed household, Jane is neglected and mistreated. She begins her struggle for love at Gateshead. She refuses to live by Mrs. Reed's rules, which would restrict all passion. Her early life at Gateshead proved to be a rather traumatic period in Jane's life. Living a childhood such as Jane's, one would expect a self-willed and rebellious personality to emerge. Jane utters, "I was a discord at Gateshead Hall; I was like nobody there... if they did not love me, in fact, as little did I love them" (10). Treated with disrespect and lack of love Jane begins her journey, her quest for love. Her rebellion towards the family that hated her fuels an inner subconscious conflict dealing with love and trust. Her defiance of Mrs. Reed is her first, but by no means her last, passionate act.

As a child, Jane is starved for affection. "Of others don't love me; I would rather die than live!" (59). She tells Helen, her only true friend. Helen assumes a sisterly like role and teaches Jane love in the form of religion. Even though circumstances are against Jane, she is not ready to settle for a man's love on any terms that are offered. She is deeply skeptical of organized religion, but she believes in God. She also has a strong sense of pride and self-respect. So she can only be happy with a man if she can reconcile that love with her love of God and her love for herself. For that, Jane must be prepared to struggle, both against external circumstances and with her own failings and weaknesses. In Jane's eyes her self-worth would severely diminish if she were to love someone who did not love her. Jane is able to gain strength from Helen's faith. It is this faith that she attains that guides Jane through her life and ultimately leads to her happiness.

It is true that it can never be foretold that a friend or a love waits upon us. The

unseen powers dictate the urges and hopes within each of us to gear our lives towards our distant goals. Jane's energetic, adventurous spirit yearns for new experiences. She accepts a governess position at Thornfield, where she teaches a lively French girl named Adele. Jane's employer at Thornfield is a dark, impassioned man named Rochester, with whom she finds herself falling secretly in love. Rochester tries to win Jane's affection by making her jealous of the beautiful Miss Blanche Ingram with whom Jane believes he is involved. Blanche Ingram feels no passion for Rochester; she is only attracted to the land owner because of his wealth and social position. But Rochester is enticed with Blanche Ingram due to only his physical passion to her. So, the marriage between them became impossible.

In fact, Rochester has only passion but not the sense of duty he has to accomplish. He is not aware about the duties and responsibilities as well as morality but he is blind with the burning passion. Adele his ward, the daughter of a French opera dancer, his former mistress, is the consequence of his passion. Even after his marriage with Jane is obstructed, Rochester again proposes Jane to run away to France with him and live as his mistress. It is morally not good of him because he has still his insane wife, Bertha Mason, alive at Thornfield. He has forgotten his moral duty for his amorous passion.

Bertha Mason's madness in the novel, has given rise to innumerable interpretations and symbolic readings. Bertha Mason represents the horror of Victorian marriage. Rochester claims to have imprisoned her because she is mad; but it is easy to imagine an opposite relation of cause and effect, in which years of enforced imprisonment and isolation have made her violently insane or at least, increased her insanity. Thus, the madwoman in the attic represents the confining and

repressive aspects of Victorian wifhood, suggesting that the lack of autonomy and freedom in marriage suffocates women, threatening their mental and emotional health. Bertha's tearing of Jane's wedding veil could be seen as symbolizing her revolt against the institution of marriage. After learning of Bertha's existence, Jane is not willing to love Rochester and become his mistress. Marrying him would mean compromising against her dignity and morality. Her rejection poses a moral victory; a good woman could not survive a loss of virtue nor live without self-respect.

In the nineteenth century, the principle of masculine domination made most women dependent upon men. However, Jane Eyre became independent. When she visits her master and love interest, Mr. Rochester at Ferndean, she declares "I am independent sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (385). Through garnering a substantial inheritance through her Uncle Reed and running a charity school in Morton, Jane gained independence from male subsidization. When she visits Ferndean, she finds Mr. Rochester desolate, missing a hand, and blind from a fire at his previous residence, Thornfield Hall. Mr. Rochester asks Jane to marry him "a poor blind man whom you will have to lead about by the hand" (394). However, unlike St. John Rivers, Mr. Rochester did not try to coax her into marriage. Jane consents that she is driven by premonition and passion rather than by principle or judgement. Jane and Rochester are equals, Jane claims "I know no weariness of Edward's society; we each do of the pulsation of the heart that beats together in our separate bosoms; consequently, we are ever together" (399). Both of them mutually accept each other unconditionally and neither of them considers the other inferior.

Jane's marriage with Rochester means the fulfillment of her principle and the consummation of passion, but marriage with St. John would mean sacrificing both her

passion and principle. St John's marriage proposal to Jane has no passion behind it; rather, he regards marriage as a business arrangement, with Jane as his potential junior partner in his missionary work. Marrying St. John out of love would be the right thing to do in the eyes of a male chauvinistic clergyman, but it would not make her happy as an independent woman, who seeks for equality. Therefore, she does not accept his proposal.

The novel, *Jane Eyre*, is due entirely to Bronte's views on marriage and love. The first example of the role of passion is in Rochester's marriage to Bertha. This marriage is based entirely on passion. Rochester does nothing to either restrain or question his passion. Because of his impulsive passion, he entraps himself in an unfulfilling marriage. He thinks nothing of his duty and he becomes the pride owner of a marriage based entirely on passion. Through Rochester's choices and consequences of those choices, Bronte asserts that marriage decisions based on passion and ignoring the role of duty will bring more than the loss of passion. People have to take care of responsibilities if they want to have fun and happiness later. The opposite side is shown through another unlikely would-be couple, Rosamond and St. John. St. John decides not to marry Rosamond based on his passion for her. He completely shuns his passion, the opposite extreme of Rochester. In doing this and his marriage decision based on his duty to God, he loses a genuine chance to gain true happiness.

Jane's passion for Rochester is all consuming. Significantly, however, it is not the only force that governs her life. She thinks that people should think of their liberty and dignity before they are married. This is apparent in the way she comes about her marriage decision with Rochester. She initially turns down a marriage with Rochester



because she knows she needs to take care of her duties to herself. She goes out and proves herself that she does not need Rochester and can survive physically without him. Similarly, she goes out to prove that Rochester has no duty to her. Later she decides to marry Rochester when she has cleared her conscience of any fear of marriage based on duty. She does this for the sole reason that she can now indulge entirely in her passion with no recourse.

## Works cited

- Adams, Hazard. ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Florida: Hartcourt Brace, 1994.
- Alcoff, Linda. "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory". *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski. California: Mayfield, 2000. 403-438.
- Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1992.
- Cecil, David. "Charlotte Bronte." *Early Victorian Novelists*. Ed. Arthur Pollard. London: Penguin Books, 1948. 87-114.
- Cixous, Helene. "Sorties." *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Ed. David Lodge. London: Longman, 1988. 425-43.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne, et al. *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- Freedman, Jane. *Feminism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Private Ltd., 1999.
- Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn. *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2 vols. London: Smith, Elder, 1857.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. 336-371.
- Groom, Bernard. *A Literary History of England*. London: Methuen, 1960.
- Hartman, Dorothy. *Women's Roles in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. London: Conner Prairie, 2006.
- Hellman B. Robert. "Charlotte Bronte's New Gothic." *Critics on Charlotte and Emily*

- Bronte*. Ed. Judith O' Neill. 32-35.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex which is Not One*. 1977. Trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca, N.K.: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Lengermann, Patricia Madoo, and Niebrugge-Brantlt. *The Women Founders: Sociology and Social Theory*. London: McGraw-Hill Company, 1998.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Lewes, G. H., and Lady Eastlake. "Jane Eyre." *Critics on Charlotte and Emily Bronte*. Ed. Judith O'Neill. 13-31.
- Murray, Mary. *The Law of Father? Patriarchy in the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Neill, S. D..*A Short History of English Novel*. London: Methuen,1962.
- O'Neill, Judith, ed. *Critics on Charlotte and Emily Bronte*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, 1992.
- Pateman, C. "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy". *Feminism and Equality*. Ed. A. Philips. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.210-251.
- Pollard, Arthur, ed. *The Victorians*. London: Penguin Books,1948.
- Ritzer, George. *Modern Sociological Theory*. New Delhi: McGraw Hill Company, 1996.
- Rowbotham, S. *Women in Movement: Feminism and Social Action*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Sampson, George. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*. London: Methuen, 1967.

- Thompson, E.P. *The Poverty of Theory*. London: Merlin, 1978.
- Tillotson, Kathleen. "Jane Eyre". *Critics on Charlotte and Emily Bronte*. Ed. Judith O'Neill. 25-31.
- Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Comparison*. New Delhi: *Rutledge*, 1997.
- Treichler P. and C. Kramarae, "Feminism." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Wendy Kolmar and Frances BartKiwski. California: Mayfield, 2000. 7-10.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: *Routledge*, 2006.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. London: J. Johnson, 1792.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. London: Hogarth, 1929.