

**Tribhuvan University**

Female Consciousness in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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**Approval Letter**

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## Abstract

This thesis attempts to illustrate Jane Austen's successful depiction of meaningful life in the society, is because of women consciousness in *Pride and Prejudice*. Consciousness means the condition of being aware and able to understand what is happening around to someone. Female consciousness is awareness of females. Females are aware and able to understand in the related issues for their self rights, freedom as well as equality to males. They are aware for their self-identity and self-recognition. Feminism makes female more conscious in their social, economical, political, life, future and so on. The theoretical application of feminism has been used to study.

By creating the conscious or enlightened female in this novel, Austen gives the messages to the society that women by nature are not inferior beings, but the existing male-oriented culture, value and political system make them so. Given the females equal opportunities, they can work as males can do. Austen creates aware females; Mrs. Bennet, her daughters, and others, who gradually aware for their self-identity and self-recognition. Mrs. Bennet being a female is tremendously aware for her daughter's good fortune by marrying to a suitable son-in-law, though her husband seems indifference towards her concern. So, she is destroying the happiness of her husband and at last she is able to settled comfortably getting all her daughters married in wealthy houses as her wish.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **1.1. Female, Female Consciousness, and Its Manifestation**

'Female' is a word used to denote woman. The term 'woman' is usually reserved for an adult, with the term girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent. Women are typically capable of giving birth, though older women who have gone through menopause and some intersex women cannot. Throughout history women have assumed various social roles in occupation. In some cultures, a majority of women have adopted specific appearances, such as wearing long hair. They have to take the equal important responsibility as of male in the development of their society.

There are various words used to refer to the quality of being a woman. The term "womanhood" merely means the state of being a woman, "femininity" is used to refer to a set of typical female qualities associated with a certain attitude to gender role, "womanliness" is like "femininity," but is usually associated with a different view of gender roles; "femaleness" is a general term, but is often used as shorthand for "human femaleness" sometimes to mean merely "womanhood," sometimes "femininity" and sometimes even as a collective term for woman.

In general, female are identified from biology as well as cultural and gender aspect. In terms of biology, the female sex organs are involved in the reproductive system, whereas the secondary sex characteristics are involved in nurturing children or, in some cultures, attracting a mate. The ovaries in addition to their regulatory function producing hormones, produce female gametes called eggs which, when fertilized by male sperm, form new genetic individuals. The uterus is an organ with tissue to protect and nurture the developing fetus and muscle to expel it when giving birth. The vagina is used in copulation and birthing. The breast evolved from the

sweat gland to produce milk, a nutritious secretion that is the most distinctive characteristic of mammals, along with live birth. In mature women, the breast is generally more prominent than in most other mammals; this prominence, not necessary for milk production, is probably at least partially the result of sexual selection. For other ways in which men commonly differ physically from women, see man. The major landmark of girls' menstruation, which occurs on average between, ages 12–13.

Most girls go through menarche and are then able to become pregnant and bear children. There are some diseases that primarily affect women, such as lupus. Also, there are some sex related illnesses that are found more frequently or exclusively in women, e.g. breast cancer, cervical cancer or ovarian cancer. Women and men may have different symptoms of an illness and may also respond differently to medical treatment. This area of medical research is studied by gender-based medicine.

Regarding to the culture, woman in many cultures, assumed a particular cultural role. In hunter gatherer societies, women were generally the gatherers of plant foods, small animal foods and fish, while men hunted meat from large animals. In more recent history, the gender roles of women have changed greatly. Traditionally, middle class women were involved in domestic tasks emphasizing child care. For poorer women, especially working class women, although this often remained an ideal, economic necessity compelled them to seek employment outside the home. The occupations that were available to them were; however, lower in pay than those available to men.

As changes in the labor market for women came about, availability of employment changed from only “dirty,” long hour factory jobs to “cleaner,” more

respectable office jobs where more education was demanded. These shifts in the labor force led to changes in the attitudes of women at work, allowing for the revolution which resulted in women becoming career and education oriented.

In the 1970s, many academic women, including scientists, avoided having children. However, throughout the 1980s, institutions tried to equalize conditions for men and women in the workplace. However, the inequalities at home stumped women's opportunities to succeed as far as men. Professional women are still responsible for domestic labor and child care. As people would say, they have a “double burden” which does not allow them the time and energy to succeed in their careers. Movements advocate equality of opportunity for both sexes and equal rights irrespective of gender. Through a combination of economic changes and the efforts of the feminist movement, in recent decades women in most societies now have access to careers beyond the traditional homemaker. Although a greater number of women are seeking higher education, salaries are often less than those of men.

Woman can define as the domestic being of the society, and has the role to develop the society by giving birth and their development. M.H. Abrams defines as:

women-the world of domesticity, for example, or the special experiences of gestation, giving birth, and nurturing, or mother-daughter and woman-woman relations – in which personal and affectional issues, and not external activism, are the primary interest.

(91)

Gender is not the same as sex, which means the biological fact, they argue; it is composed of a set of socially defined character traits. For example, a man is supposed to be self-assertive, calm, rational and protective of the weaker sex. Contrarily, a woman is supposed to be soft, docile, seeking to please her male



relatives, trying to maintain harmony at the cost of her rights and identity. The patriarchal society, dominated by male values as universal values, constructs such gender roles. Women are made weak by many things as a feminist critic Sheila Ruth's observation makes it clear how women are rendered weak in character and self-assertion:

Many factors in the environment conspire to impede women's competence and accomplishment in many areas- hostile or deprecating attitudes of incumbent men, lack of support and assistance from all quarters, dual and/or incompatible professional and non professional functions, pervasiveness of the male (alien, inhospitable) ambience, and socialization that erodes confidence and self-assertion. Rather than being inferior, women are hampered in developing competence in the most profound ways. (160)

Women are expected to help and serve men physically, taking care of their homes, property, clothing or persons; economically, doing numerous household chores for which women are paid so little or not paid at all; sexually, as wives, mistresses, or prostitutes who satiate men's sexual needs; and reproductively, assuring men of their family line, the continuity of dynasty. The image of woman as man's complement offers an extremely effective support mechanism for the masculist self-image; the softer, weaker, and more dependent the woman is, the stronger and more powerful the man appears; the more servant the woman, the more master the man.

In social practice, to clarify by example, a boy is supposed to be militant and brave while a girl is supposed to be modest and obedient. These attributes are merely imposed, not necessarily biologically acquired. But such is the power of images and practice that now they are universally accepted even by women without noticing how

harmful such cultural practices of limiting the power and rights of women have been.

In this regard, as Catherine Mackinnon says:

Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender, as socially constructed embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender made into the sexes, as we know them, by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalize male sexual dominance and female sexual submission. If this is true, sexuality is linchpin of gender inequality. (60)

Heterosexuality reinforced men's supremacy over women. Women who had sex with men were supposed to be surrendering themselves to the dominance of men.

Thus, the female members of the society, because of their sex, are deprived of the many privileges enjoyed by the males' one. Women are divested of power, be it economic, political, or any other. This state of affair is reflected in literature too. In portraying female characters, writers whether knowingly or unknowingly happen to show the women as weak, powerless, in need of the support and guidance of men. This is the reflection of the masculist mentality and psyche so firmly rooted even the best of best minds as the creative writers, political thinkers and the path finder's of society.

Female consciousness is awareness of females. It helps to change the condition of woman. Psychologically speaking 'consciousness' is often defined as: a sense of one's personal or collective identity, including the attitudes, beliefs, and sensitivities held by or considered characteristic of an individual or group. It is the condition of being aware and able to understand what is happening around to us as well as the state of knowing that something exists or it means someone's ideas, feelings or opinion about social, economic, politics, life and so on.

Therefore “female consciousness” usually refers to the way women relate to themselves and what it means to be female, e.g. gender roles. It's a much debated topic in feminist studies. In gender studies or gender communication in particular this aspect has a profound influence on the way a woman interacts with others and the way in which she perceives herself as an individual.

Female awareness brings a change in a society from their right of liberty, equality, property, education and so on. It inspires woman to publish their books and articles to challenge the old assumption upon them. They also understand in the related issues for their self rights, freedom as well as equality to males and are superior as males with the meaningful life. Temma Kaplan says:

Female consciousness, recognition of what a particular class, culture and historical period expect from women, creates a sense of rights and obligation that provides motive force for actions .... centers upon the rights of gender, on social concerns, on survival .... accept the gender system of their society; indeed, such consciousness emerges from the division of labor by sex, which assigns women the responsibility of preserving life .... demand the rights that their obligations entail. The collective drive to secure those rights that results from the division of labor sometimes has revolutionary consequences insofar as it politicizes the networks of everyday life. (545)

Kaplan makes clear from the above extract that female consciousness is recognition of a particular class, culture and period expecting to woman, which creates a rights and obligation that provide motive force for action.

Woman consciousness discloses the sexual discrimination occurring perpetually and also shows how woman have been empowered speak of their rights in

the recent era and have cultivated awareness among them. That awareness has not remained limited to voicing out of the women's rights and sexual equality in the public and to create political propaganda. Regarding female consciousness Margaret Walter says:

“consciousness - raising is a way of forming a political analysis on information we can trust is true. That information is our experiences”  
 .... “agitation for specific freedom is worthless without the preliminary raising of consciousness necessary to utilize these freedoms in full”....  
 “most women had little experiences of group dynamics. Because the play of feeling within a group can be so unpredictable, even explosive, one or other member of a group might easily feel she was being unfairly criticized, made a scapegoat, or even excluded.” (112-14)

Many prominent feminist critics' voice is developing consciousness in females since 1960s. M.H. Abrams says: “Much of feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be interrelated with the movement by political feminists for social, legal and cultural freedom and equality” (88). It means feminist critics are awaking females in their social, legal, political and cultural freedom as well as equality for them.

Female consciousness develop female in their several aspects; educational system, domestic affairs, sexual discrimination, dowry system, male hegemony, and political rights.

Female are aware to the educational system of patriarchal society that has made them destroy in thinking. Mary Wollstonecraft has bitter experience of the educational system of patriarchal society that has deliberately made woman inferior by emotional and sentimental type of texts. She criticizes this low type of education for woman and says: “I advise my sex not to read such filmy works, it is to induce

them to read something superior, for I coincide in opinion with sagacious man, who having a daughter and niece under his care, pursued a very different plan with each” (399). Thus awareness of female creates them encouraged to deconstruct the patriarchal education in order to reconstruct the system of education that is beneficial of the whole community equally both female and male.

Because of the consciousness, female challenges the male hegemony to create a favorable situation for them to develop their personality. They try to establish common ground and hit hard the male centered biased attitude. They think that they themselves are not the reason to be unfit, but it is male's desire, not to give the woman any respect.

Female are expected to stay at home and confine themselves to domestic duties and social graces-playing music and decorating themselves for men. In a sense, they are satisfied with their given status in the society. They have no idea about their secondary object like female position in the family. They are totally unaware of their state of being, and most of them believe that is what their natural role and duties and follows them without any complain. Not only ordinary people, even the scholars, think in the same way and help to strengthen this concept. The awareness of female about the domestic oppression by male upon them encourages them to challenge male oriented social structure that prevents woman in public life. Being conscious females take inspiration to question male in society. They deconstruct the male made position of women in a house to make them acknowledge the reality of female power.

Female consciousness tries to dismantle the conventional patterns to establish nonsexist ones. The issues like identity, self individuality and freedom becomes the common features for women. Woman awareness makes woman to explore her psychological turmoil in a patriarchal socio-cultural frame. They have waged a

psychological, social and intellectual war against the patriarchal systems and try to come out of every bondage; marital, social and cultural to demonstrate her search for identity. We can find the protest of picketing a Miss World demonstration in Nigeria by Margaret Walter's voice:

Miss World demonstration .... when Nigerian militants demonstrated violently against its 'parade of nudity', which they thought would encourage promiscuity and Aids, then when several contestants refused to participate because a young Nigerian woman, sentenced to death under Islamic sharia law for have become pregnant outside marriage, was reprieved – but only until she had weaned her baby. The beauty queens' gesture was both courageous and effective, though interestingly, one insisted, with a hint of anxiety, that she took up her stand, certainly not because she was feminist, or even because she was a woman, but because she was a human being. (04)

The quote clears that woman fought against the Nigerian militants demonstrated violently against its nude parade, whereas they are blamed as to encourage diseases such Aids. Even most of the woman contestants refused to participate because of the prevalent Islamic sharia law imposed upon them, which will sentenced them to death for have become pregnant outside marriage, but the beauty queen fight for their freedom with thinking of being a woman as well as a human being.

Female can get political rights due to their awareness. We are informed from the history that the vote gradually became central to feminist demands. It was seen an important both symbolically (as a recognition of women's rights to full citizenship) and practically (as necessary way of furthering reforms and making practical changes in woman's lives). But winning the vote proved a complicated struggle, and one that

lasted for decades. The determination and the persistence with which women argued, and increasingly demonstrated, for the right to vote make an inspiring story; all the more so given the equal willpower. To achieve the voting right woman demonstrate as of Margaret Walters remarks:

Some militants went even further; they set fire to the house of a minister who was hostile to the cause, and two women actually tried to burn down a crowded theatre in Dublin. And one woman, Emily Wilding Davison, died for the vote. Having declared that a 'a tragedy was wanted' for the cause. (81-82)

The above quote clears that awareness of female creates demonstration for their political freedom through the voting rights. They are even ready to die by facing the tragic incident. One woman named Emily Wilding Davison was died. They declared that there must be arises the tragic situation after their expression.

There is a literary nexus among consciousness, female consciousness and feminism. Feminism, a literary movement said to be began in 1960s, is an approach to social life, philosophy, and ethics that commits itself to correcting biases leading to the subordination of women. Some of the main issues raised into the feminism are gender biasness, social structures, legal and political procedures, and the general culture. It arises from innate differences in male and female psychology, or whether the different values reflect the way men and women have been taught to form different aspirations and ideals.

The first chapter presents a brief introductory outline of some important issues like consciousness, female consciousness as well as its brief exploration. The second chapter tries to develop a theoretical mode to be applied for analyzing the novel. It throws light on the introduction to the feminism and discusses the terms related to it.

The third chapter analyzes the text on the basis of the theoretical mode. The extracts from the text provide evidence for analysis. The concluding chapter summarizes the finding of the analysis. Thus, this study will try to give a fair judgment of Austen on the basis of the study of her novel *Pride and Prejudice*.



## Chapter II: Feminism

### 2.1. Feminism

Feminism is a part of women's movement. It involves various movements, theories and philosophies which are concerned with the issue of gender differences that advocates equality of women, and that campaign for women's rights and interests. Feminist thinkers focus on to uplift women's personalities and to make them aware of the women's existence in a patriarchal society. The term "feminism" was first used to mark the support for women's equal rights with men and also refers the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. It talks about the strength of women in terms of everything in their life, tries to establish the equality in female and male. The British feminist, Troil Moi, critic of 1980s has used the term feminists of feminism in political sense. With regard to feminist criticism, she classifies the word 'feminist,' and 'female' and 'feminism' differently:

I will suggest that we distinguish between 'feminism' as political position, 'femaleness' as a matter of biology and 'femininity' as a set of culturally defined characteristics .... The word 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political levels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in late 1960s. (260)

Besides defining feminism with the machine of politics, she further clarifies the feminists criticism in these words: "Feminist criticism, then is a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply it concern for gender in literature" (204).

Feminism is an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Women are taken to be weak in terms of education, culture, body, religion and

society, whereas males are considered as strong in every aspect of life. The female writers have written for the emancipation of female from patriarchy as well as to establish women's position in the society. Women repress love, tenderness, compassion, beauty and pleasure. Possessing so much quality again they are depending upon the patriarchal society.

Feminist movement is about women's fight for freedom in every aspect. A prominent critic, M. H. Abrams says, "Feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be closely inter-related with the movement by political feminists for social, economic and cultural freedom and equality" (88). It is the movement for equality in social, political, educational and cultural aspects.

Feminism is a struggle of women for the womanhood. So, feminists focus on the women's rights and their freedom. They do not agree upon society's view upon them. Feminism affects the world politically, culturally, spiritually and economically. They debate for the equality of sex. Their struggle for women's right started two centuries ago. The foundation of struggle is marked by the publication of *A Vindication of Right of Woman* (1772) by Mary Wollstonecraft. At the time women were regarded inferior males were always superior who tried to put women under their control again they were supported by the situation and society. Later on the situation changed.

Women became conscious they questioned upon the male and fought to choose the husband before that views were taken as slave and were sold by husbands. Women were neglected; they couldn't get any education or training. Mary Wollstonecraft raised her voice in favor of better training for woman. She was the first feminist theorist. In the nineteenth century Jane Austen, George Eliot, Bronte Sisters focused on feminist prospective. All the female writers weren't feminists and

feminists may be male or female. Francis Wright the first woman orator raises her voice for the better education to be offered to women. In 1813 Oberlin College was established for co-education. Females were given education to make good wives. Women began to be unified in America by starting American Woman Suffrage Association. They fought for emancipation and betterment of woman. So they got voting right in 1928. Margaret Walters, in concerned to the fight for the vote suffragettes says, “In 1918, women over the age of 30 were given the vote; and in March 1928, under a Conservative government, they finally won it on equal terms with men” (85).

Feminist critics analyze the text by male writers. Kate Millett in her *Sexual Politics* (1977) presented the male authors. In this context M.H. Abrams says:

Millett signifies the mechanism that express and enforce the relations of power in society; she analyzes Western social arrangements and institutions as covert ways of manipulating power so as to establish and perpetuate the dominance of men and the subordination of women. In her book she attacks the male bias in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and also analyzes selected passages by DH Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet as revealing the ways in which the authors, in their fictional fantasies, aggrandize their aggressive phallic selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects. (88)

This show the modern feminist writers like Kate Millett emphasize on the emancipation of women by expressing their aggressing feeling.

Actually this movement was launched by two active feminist group of woman in America: (a) woman’s rights advocates consisting of experienced professional women demanding for woman’s equal rights outside the home and (b) woman

liberations consisting of less experienced young woman motivated by politics and violence. Though both of these feminist groups were organized with two different purposes, their main objective was to protect women from the male domination and provide them equal social, political, and legal rights. But the 'Feminist' got worldwide popularity only after the International Women's year 1975. In the historical development of feminist theories, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of their own* (1977), Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) have heralded a new era in women's literature raising their voices for women.

The history of feminism can be divided into three waves. The first wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the second was in the 1960s and 1970s, and the third extends from 1990s to the present. The global idea of feminism refers the belief that men and women deserve equality in all opportunities, treatment, respect, and social rights. In general, feminists are people who try to acknowledge social inequality based on gender and stop it from continuing.

Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gilbert were the renowned critics to enlighten the women about the unstable existence of women in a male governed society. These feminists talked about religion, festival, education, culture, myth, literature and so on it that the above mentioned things were the tools for male to dominate and exploit women. But with the development of time the movement named feminist came into existence to reject the male culture, male norms and values that undervalued women as complements parts of men the feminism as a movement aimed awakening in all sides.

The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792 is regarded as the groundbreaking event in the history of feminism. The book presents the portrayal of women in the world of literature authored by men of different time. The central contention of the book is that human mind is impressionable and that woman have been forced into believing in their own inferiority and superiority of men by the representations in literatures and the constant preaching of parents of life. Specially, the sentimental novels which were in vogue at that time become the butt of Wollstonecraft's attack for spreading pernicious influence on the mentality of the young women. Such sentimental novels, she writes, inspired women to be domiciled, and emotionally blackmailed woman to pay more attention to their physical beauty rather than to their spiritual and intellectual growth:

Everything they see or hear serves to fix impressions, calls forth emotions, and associations, ideas that give a sexual character to their mind. False notions of beauty and delicacy stop the growth of their limbs and produce a sickly soreness, rather than delicacy of organs .... This cruel association of ideas, which everything conspires to twist into all their habits of thinking. (395-96)

Wollstonecraft was also critical of the religion that puts woman under the power of men. As her writings point out, women in those times were not free at all regarding the choice of their intellectual exercise, choice of husbands and career in life. They were expected to act and live according to the fancy of the men. As a result, it was not surprising that woman had no sense of public responsibility, moral height or intellectual depth:

Females, in fact, denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have

their attention naturally drawn from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts through the private duty of any other members of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please. (398)

Her book was chiefly concerned with winning basic human rights and dignity for woman such education, right to vote, right to choose the right person in marriage. She tried to convince the society of her times that since women are a part of the same society, it cannot develop until women are recognized and uplifted.

Kate Millet favors power as an inevitable matter to change the society. In *Sexual Politics*, she has cited the fact that power is exercised in the society by subjugating women. She emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their status and career. In the large canvas of male literary works. Women are presented just as sexual objects, whose roles are subservient to those of the central male protagonist. Violence and domination seemed to be the main idea by which the unequal power relation in the area of sexual politics is maintained. Women began to understand that patriarchy had its origin not in the realm of public politics but only in men's control over women's bodies, particularly their sexuality and their generative capacities. Millet analyzed the sexual politics of literature in her work.

An American feminist, Elaine Showalter published one influential work of feminist criticism, *Towards the Feminist poetics* (1977). In this work Showalter provides a survey of the literatures written by the famous female writers of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through this work Showalter raised a question about the problems of not including the book written by female in the literary course and to be printed. Further than this, she argued for the separate canon building of the female's

literary texts. She says, “Women’s literature must go beyond these scenarios of compromise, madness, and death .... its purpose is to discover the new world” (1229). She says that women are different in terms of nature, race, culture and nation so they cannot be studied universally. Women texts should have specific style of reading.

Virginia Woolf largely contributed to feminist critical writing in the early twentieth century with such critical works as *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and other numerous essays such as ‘If Shakespeare had had a sister’ in which she tried to expose how the cultural, economic and psychological limitations in patriarchal society have prevented women from realizing their creative faculties. She provided powerful explanations as to why female writers could not come up with great work in literature. The causes lied not in the biological and intellectual inferiority of women but in the discriminatory and constricting social conditions of the times. The lack of material resource directly affected and limited female space for creativity. Economic dependence, even the lack of an undisturbed room for writing, lack of time, domestic burdens, and lack of proper education all conspired against female creativity. If male writers also had to face such limiting circumstances they would have come up with the little success in literary career. Woolf says:

No woman of sense and modesty could write book, Dorothy, who was sensitive and melancholy, the very opposite of the Duches in temper, write nothing. Letters did not count. A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father’s sick bed. She could write them by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them. The strange thing is, I thought, turning over the pages of Dorothy’s letters, what a

gift that untaught and solitary girl had for the framing of a sentence, for the fashioning of a scene. (820)

Simone de Beauvoir a French Feminist had brought new dimension on feminism by writing *The Second Sex* (1949). She said all the male writers think females as negative “object” and to man are dominating and defining subject. M.H. Abrams says:

A much more radical critical mode was launched in France by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* a wide ranging critic of the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object of other to man as the defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity its general; the book dealt also with the great collective myths of women in the works of many male writers. (88)

Simone de Beauvoir has got great courage to write about the present days. She kept myths of women in the works of other male writers.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar concentrated on the suppressed female with a kind of realization of female identity. According to them, patriarchal aesthetic always wants a girl to be an in-animate object. But they argued that the nineteenth century women writers choose to express their own female anger in services of duplicitous textual strategies where by both the angel and the monster, the sweet heroine and the saying madwoman, are aspects of the author's self image, as well as elements of false anti patriarchal strategies.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) puts a new dimension to see the nineteenth century women writers in terms of twentieth century feminism. Their book stresses especially psychodynamics of women writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, they carry out a feminist revision of the essential



psychoanalytical definition of the women artists and woman-woman relations in which personal and affection issues are the primary interest. M.H. Abrams says:

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar' *The madwoman in the Attic* (1979) stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Its authors propose that the "anxiety of authorship," resulting from stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effected in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the idealized heroine .... the madwoman .... "usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage." (91)

Feminist literacy criticism is revisionist criticism. M. Gilbert Sandra and Susan Gubar have quoted Endriene Rich in *Infection in the Sentence*:

Revision, the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction, an act of survival only by actively seeking a female precursor who far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible. (1244)

The feminist criticism in the beginning was headache for those writers and readers who were habituated only to think male domination. Feminist criticism shifts its center to the study of literature by women. Nowadays it has been believed that the way women create literary text is different from that of male's text. It treats women as readers and writers. Now feminist theory is used for the investigation of sex discrimination and the power balance between two genders. It expresses the female's ideas for emancipation and against the traditional patriarchal society. They developed

various approaches on feminist criticism and interpret feminism from the various angles.

Feminism is the belief that men and women deserve equality in all opportunities, treatment, respect and social rights. We find feminism in four types: radical feminism, which seeks to eliminate gender roles completely, socialist feminism, which focuses on how capitalism serves to maintain feminism, cultural feminism, which emphasizes how society would be better off if traditionally womanly traits we rewarded, and liberal feminism, which seeks to have equality between men and women in all domains.

In brief, socialist feminism is a feminist movement that calls for an end to capitalism through a socialist reformation of our economy. Basically, socialist feminism argues that capitalism strengthens and supports the sexist status quo because men are the ones who currently have power and money. Those men are more willing to share their power and money with other men which, means that women are continually given fewer opportunities and resources. This keeps women under the control of men. Socialist feminism focuses on economics and politics. Why are women paid less than men for the same work? Socialist feminists point out that this difference is based on a capitalist system.

The second type of feminism, cultural feminism, is a feminist movement that points out how modern society would benefit by encouraging feminine behavior instead. For example we can see this in the business world for sure; people who own companies, are CEOs, and are successful in business are certainly likely to be aggressive, competitive people. This is also likely to be true in high-powered politicians, such as senators and presidents. While competition and aggression are useful in certain contexts, cultural feminists point out that by encouraging the

negative aspects of competition and aggression such as the suppression of feelings, crimes like assault and murder, and even social issues, such as domestic violence.

The third type of feminism, Liberal Feminism is a feminist movement that believes all individuals should be free to explore equal opportunities and rights. It's really a pretty simple idea. Liberal feminist just want men and women to have equality in all situations, no more, no less. Liberal feminism would want to see equal pay for men and women and more representation of women in politics and business, just like other form of feminism. However, liberal feminists are also willing to point out places and times when men are victims of sexism and they want to end those problems as well. This form of feminism is the closest to our definition of feminism in general

Besides, the variation of feminism, Marxist feminism is a subtype of feminist, focuses on the social institutions of private property and capitalism to explain and criticize gender equality and oppression. Private property gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political and domestic struggle between the sexes, and is the root of women's oppression in the current social context. It argues that a women's subordination is not a result of her biological disposition but of social relations. And the men's efforts to achieve their demands for control of women's labor and sexual faculties have gradually solidified and became institutionalized in the nuclear family. In regarding to the Feminist criticism, Marxism and structuralism Elaine Showalter says:

It is not only because the exchange between feminism, Marxism, and structuralism has hitherto been so one-sided, however, that I think attempts at syntheses have so far been unsuccessful. While scientific criticism struggles to purge itself of the subjective, feminist criticism is

willing to assert. The experience of women can easily disappear, become mute, invalid, and invisible, lost in the diagrams of structuralist or the class conflict of the Marxists. (1233)

At last the extreme form of feminism, radical feminism is mostly the stereotype of feminism, which a feminist movement that believes sexism is so deeply rooted in society that the only cure is to eliminate the concept of gender completely. Radical feminist suggest changes, such as finding technology that will allow babies to be grown outside of a woman's body, to promote more equality between men and women. This will allow women to avoid missing work for maternity leave, which radical feminists argue is one reason women aren't promoted as quickly as men. In fact, radical feminists would argue that the entire traditional family system is sexist. Men are expected to work outside the home while women are expected to care for children and clean the house. Radical feminists note that this traditional dichotomy maintains men are economically in power over women, and therefore, the traditional family structure should be rejected. Radical feminism is the most extreme form.

Radical feminism's strong interest in recovering or discovering positive elements in femininity, in combination with its location of men as the beneficiaries of sexual power relations, results in a relatively sharp division drawn between men and women. Cixous represent a distinctively French brand of radical feminist which centers on the concept of feminine writing. She emphasizes on the difference in language and text. She thinks that the source in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* as:

.... feminine writing which has its source in the mother, in the stage of the mother-child relation before the child acquires the male-centered verbal language .... this prelinguistic and unconscious potentiality manifests itself in those written texts which abolishing all repression,

undermine and subvert the fixed signification, the logic and the “closure” of our phallogocentric language and open out into a joyous free play of meanings. (92-93).

In other words, feminist in this tradition see a difference between men and women as inevitable or at least so established historically that it is very deeply embedded. Sexual difference for example, women’s capacity to give birth is not socially insignificant nor is something that will become irrelevant once old-fashioned prejudices restricting women’s opportunities abandoned. Rather than perceiving the (sexual) body as mere, inanimate ‘meat’ separate from social practices, power to change, this form of feminism stresses the focus in the interconnection between the bodies and society. The main idea of the radical feminist writing is to establish women’s supposedly subordination within the patriarchal society by providing their at least equally status in relation in men.

Radical feminism offers a real challenge to the rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. It provides a positive value of womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating women into arenas of activity associated with men. Radical feminism focuses on women’s oppression as women in a social order dominated by men. According to this approach, the distinguishing character of women’s oppression is their oppression as women, not as members of other groups such as their social class. Hence, the explanation for women’s oppression is seen as lying in sexual oppression. Women are oppressed because of their sex.

Feminist, by awakening women, try to establish common ground. They hit hard the male centered biased attitude. The feminist’s movement makes aware to the women that they themselves are not the reason to be unfit, but it is male’s desire, not

to give the women any respect, Making women enlightened, the feminist movement challenges the male hegemony to create a favorable situation for women to develop their personality. Jane Austen is one of the pillars of being mutinous towards patriarchal restrictions. Laura Mooneyham adds:

Since the 1975 publication of Gilbert and Gubar's *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, feminist criticism of Jane Austen has often focused on Austen's double role as upholder of the decorous aims of patriarchy and a secret subversive, consciously or unconsciously representing sites of struggle against patriarchy's restrictions. (130)

## **2.2. The Issue of Female Consciousness**

Feminism makes women conscious. It is a rebellious movement. It awakens women to bring a change in a society for their right to liberty, equality, property, education and so on. This female awareness movement helps to change their condition. Similarly, it also inspires women to publish their books and articles to challenge the old assumption that prevents women to be a writer and to create new territory where women will have the equal space like men.

From the origin of the human beings, the existence of women is miserable due to the imposed laws by men upon women in a patriarchal society. Women in such a society became the means to fulfill the sexual desire of men. Right of parental property, individual decision in marriage, access to education and cultivation of mind through creativeness were prevented. They became the object of sex. Their role was limited within the frame of house works and they became the object of sex. Their role was limited within the frame of house works and they became the source of

entertainment for man. They had to please their husbands at any cost. Simone De Beauvoir says:

We have seen woman as *flesh*; the flesh of the male is produced in the mother's body and re-created in the embraces of the woman in love. Thus woman is related to *nature*, she incarnates it: value of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, she represents to man the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. (994)

In patriarchal society, sexual differences caused sexual discrimination and repression. Because of the biological differences, women have been compelled to lead a poor life. The sexual difference has caused women to remain within the four walls of a house. The patriarchal society has its own norms, values and culture. By imposing these norms, values and culture upon women, they dominate women. But, with the development of time, the movement named feminism has come into existence to deny the male culture, male norms and values that undervalues women as complements part of men. The feminism, as a movement, has aimed at awakening women in all domains of their life. Its overall goal is to develop all round personalities of women. This movement endeavors to make the women conscious of the fact that by biological difference they are not inferior to men. They could be equal to men if they get the same education, opportunities and chances. They can do the work what man can do.

Feminist movement made conscious to the female about the domestic oppression by male upon women. It encouraged the women to challenge male-oriented social structure that prevented women in public life. Feminist movement gave inspiration to question the assigned role of female in the society. Feminists aimed at deconstructing male made position of women in a house to make them

acknowledge the reality of female power. For a long period women's publications had been among the materials removed from the public and school libraries. As a result they could not write. Virginia Woolf is quite unsatisfied of this situation. She raises question about this precarious situation and vents her desire as:

Whatever effect discouragement and criticism had upon their writing- and I believe that they had a very great effect-that was unimportant compared with the other difficulty which faced them (I was still considering those early nineteenth century novelists) when they came to set their thoughts on paper-that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. Is useless to go to be great men writers for half however much one may go to them for pleasure.

(824)

A simple biological difference between male and female has been a tool for male to dominate female by male. A fundamental goal of feminist theory is to analyze gender relations. The purpose of feminist theory is to avoid thinking about gender. Feminists are proud of their femaleness and have made a vital tool to feminist to perceive their existence. In patriarchal society man define women as other and man as universal because of sex difference. The radical feminists insist that the root of women's oppression is buried deep in patriarchy. Kate Millett argues:

Sex is political primarily because the male-female relationship is determined by it. Because of gender difference, men control the public and private world. The patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always has the dominant of "masculine" roles and the women always has the



subordinate ones. This ideology becomes the tool for the men to oppress women. (200)

Feminism, being a political movement, awakens women about their miserable existence in the male governed society is because of sex difference. By making conscious to the female about their precarious situation, this movement helps women gain not only in legal, political and economic liberties and equalities but also in sexual ones. Margaret Walters says: “consciousness-raising is a way of forming a political analysis on information we can trust is true. That information is our experience”.... “agitation for specific freedoms is worthless without the preliminary raising of consciousness necessary to utilize these freedoms in full” (112).

Feminism awakened women with the new idea to struggle against the male dominated society to free women from the male trap. By enlightening the female, feminist advocated for emancipation and equality. But feminism as a political movement awakened them to dismantle all the disciplines of patriarchal society to address the absence of women in various academic areas by uncovering women's achievement. Female awareness tried to dismantle the conventional patterns to establish nonsexist ones. The issues like identity self individuality and freedom became the common features for feminists to awaken women.

## Chapter III: Female Consciousness in *Pride and Prejudice*

### 3.1. Elizabeth Bennet's Consciousness

Elizabeth Bennet is a protagonist female character of the novel. She is a second of the five Bennet sisters. She is charming, attractive intelligent and a keen judge of human nature. She is a self-respectful young woman of many qualities. She is alert in her mind and heart. She stands for 'prejudice' character in the novel. Darcy, the hero of the story, shows his haughtiness and pride on the occasion of his first meeting with Elizabeth, heroine. Darcy is possessed by family pride and Elizabeth by the prejudice that he is all pride. The moments at Meryton ball she is only next to Jane in dancing and in impressing the assembly. Her performance at the ball is commendable. She overhears the talk between Darcy and Bingley at Netherfield, in which Darcy insults her by saying:

“Which do you mean?” and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me.” (8)

Her pride and self-respect are wounded. This creates a strong feeling of prejudice in her heart against Darcy. This is enough to hurt her dignity and she does not forget this when the next time Darcy asks her to dance with him, and she declines the offer.

The conversation between Darcy and Elizabeth shows both the characters revealing their pride and prejudice. Elizabeth ridicules what is wise and good by mocking Darcy and is thus guilty of poor judgment based on prejudice as:

“Certainly”.... “there are such people, but I hope I am not one of *them*. I hope I never ridicule what is wise or good. Follies and nonsense, whims, and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can.-But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without.” (46)

Though the above quote is mocking Darcy by Elizabeth, he seems to be confident that his own pride is controlled, and so is Elizabeth, while both are in fact wrong.

Elizabeth is a very conscious about his future as well as his family matters. She rejects the marriage offers of Collins and Darcy politely but confidently. She also worried about his daughters’ beloved illness. When Elizabeth has been reading the letters of Jane written to her since her arrival at Kent, Darcy enters the room and to her utter surprise suddenly confesses his love for her and proposes to her saying that despite her lower social status or he is unable to overcome her emotions. He was assuming that Elizabeth will accept his proposal. But being insulted she rejects his proposal with saying:

“You have reduced him to his present state of poverty, comparative poverty. You have withheld the advantages, which you must know to have been designed for him. You have deprived the best years of his life, of that independence which was no less his due than his desert. You have done all this! and yet you can treat the mention of his misfortunes with contempt and ridicule.” .... “You could not have made me the offer of your hand in any possible way that would have tempted me to accept it.” (154-55)

The above extract shows that she cannot return his feelings or feel grateful. She says that she can never love a man as he, giving her reasons as his haughtiness in

proposing to her and his interference in Jane's love affair and his ill-treatment of Wickham.

Elizabeth rejects the proposal of Mr. Collins against her mother's wish also. She is in her own way to marriage and life. Collins proposes to Elizabeth giving her the practical reasons for his proposal and the advantages Elizabeth will enjoy as his wife. Collins assures Elizabeth that after marrying her, their entailed property will remain with the family. But she insistently refuses his proposal by expressing her desire:

“Your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal.-You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so.” (88)

From the above extract she clears Collins that she is not such a young lady to accept his proposal as his wish. She is very aware for her future. He would not make her happy as well as she also doesn't makes his life meaningful if she accept the marriage offer from him. Likely, she expresses her consciousness regarding herself future by marriage with saying to him:

“You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise.” .... “I thank you again and again for the honour you have done me in your proposals, but to accept them is absolutely impossible.” (88-89)

She advises him that it is not possible to accept his proposal. She has to judge her life herself without his interest, though he is a happy and rich man. In fact, Elizabeth's speech indicates that her act of courage and firmness for the principle she believes in. She expresses her conscious desire of her life by rejecting his offer. She thinks that the marriage offer is being a financially and socially sound contract.

She appears to be quite susceptible to prejudice in the beginning. But the same time she is also flexible and capable of making amends. When she comes to know of Darcy's innocence, she changes her attitude towards him and slowly but steadily begins to love him. At last she is quick to admit that she is selfish and thanks Darcy for kindness, being fully aware how his pride must have been injured by her expression:

Mr. Darcy, I am very selfish creature; and, for the sake of giving relief to my own feelings, care not how much I may be wounding yours. I can no longer help thanking you for your unexampled kindness to my poor sister. Even since I have known it, I have been most anxious to acknowledge to you how gratefull I feel it. Were it known to the rest of my family, I should not have merely my own gratitude to express."

(293)

The above quote shows her regretion towards judging of Darcy. Finally, both Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice are destroyed and they are united.

At last, Elizabeth sees the reality of Darcy and has to make others see through the appearance. Her defense of Darcy's pride, her boldness in speaking of her attitude to Darcy to her father, show that she genuinely in love with Darcy instead of his father, Mr. Bennet asking her "Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have not you always hated him?" (302). She replies with tears in her eyes:

“Have you any other objection,” .... “than your belief of my indifference?” .... “I do, I do like him,” .... “I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.”  
(302)

The above quote clears that she easily accepts Mr. Darcy’s offer and make him her life partner, but only from the family especially of father’s approval. Soon after they settled down with marriage as Austen remarks:

Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both ever sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them. (312)

Elizabeth is the most talented of all the Bennet girls. She is so intelligent that she can easily understand that that the Bingleys are not as good as her sister Jane. She acknowledges Miss Bingley as a very cunning and proud lady. Miss Caroline Bingley, who cherishes hopes to marry Darcy, becomes jealous of Elizabeth with saying “I am all astonishment. How long has she been such a favorite?-and pray when I am to wish you joy?” (21). Austen also speaks of Miss Bingley’s attitude as: “She often tried to provoke Darcy into disliking her guest, by talking of their supposed marriage, and planning his happiness in such an alliance,” (42). Similarly, Bingley and his sister leave Netherfield without giving any formal information to them and later on, Jane herself experiences the rude behavior of Miss Bingley when she is in London staying with her aunt and uncle.

Elizabeth’s attractiveness does not rest merely on her physical charm, but on the extraordinary liveliness of her mind. She possess and independence of mind and thought. She has as much keen insight as an intelligent man of her age. When even the

smart Mr. Bennet fails to foresee any danger in sending Lydia to Brington, she alone is clear-sighted enough to warn her father solemnly against the indiscretion of such an attitude. She warns her father by:

“If you were aware” .... “of the very great disadvantage to us all, which must arise from the public notice of Lydia’s unguarded and important manner; nay, which has already arisen from it, I am sure you would judge differently in the affair.” (185)

The warning is based solely on her correct estimate of her sister’s character and temperament. Later events show how far she is justified in her doubts.

The character of Elizabeth is one of the sacrifice and affection. She is extremely conscious of her responsibility towards her daughter treatment. Her love and affection for her sister Jane is exemplary and admirable. She prepared to sacrifice everything for her. The moments she hears of Jane’s illness, she immediately hurries to Netherfield for her sister concern as Austen’s view:

“Elizabeth, feeling really anxious, was determined to go to her, though the carriage was not to be had; and she was no horsewoman, walking was her only alternative. She declared her resolution” .... “I shall be very fit to see Jane – which is all I want.” (25)

The above quote is Elizabeth’s attitudes towards her ill sister Jane, who is in Netherfield, three miles in distance from her house. After then she say, “No indeed. I do not wish to avoid the walk. The distance is nothing, when one has a motive; only three miles. I shall be back by dinner” (25) and she reach there and in Jane’s service day and night caring but little about her own comforts. It is her eager concern towards her family responsibilities.

Again, when Bingley leaves for London, perhaps with no hope of returning, her pain is no less than that of her sister who has been thinking of marrying Bingley, and when she comes to know that Darcy has been instrumental in detaching Bingley from Jane, her prejudice against Darcy reaches a high pitch. She rejects the offer because of his part in ruining the happiness of her sister as saying:

“I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted *there*. You dare not you cannot deny that you have been the principal, if not the only means of dividing them from each other, of exposing one to the censure of the world for caprice and instability, the other to its decision for disappointed hopes, and involving them both in misery of the acutest kind” .... “Can you deny that you have done it?” (154)

The extract clear us that Elizabeth consciousness towards her sister life and regarding with this her rejection of marriage offer by Darcy. But in fact he is a man of a good fortune and having a ten thousand pound income in a year. She is eagerly concern with her sister whereas in a poor condition in London, which is because of the involvement of her beloved Darcy’s attempt.

### **3.2. Marriage with Good Fortune for Woman**

In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen creates a little world which reflects this social background of the age. It rightly sets the theme for the entire novel as woman consciousness towards finding the suitable and the right partner for settling down to a harmonious home for the young and especially the major female characters. The opening sentence introduces us the main themes and characters and involves us in what is going to happen. The opening sentences of novel begin with:



It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters. (01)

In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen makes awaken women for their individual freedom regarding to matrimony to settle down the future for the happy life in society through the depiction of female character Mrs. Bennet, her daughters, Miss Caroline Bingley, Lady Catherine De Bough and others. Austen's depiction of character relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy, Jane and Bingley, Charlotte and Collins, and Lydia and Wickman, are instrumental in developing the status of marriage with expecting the good fortune with its social and economic implications. There are glimpses of anger at the limitations of an economic world in which woman had no future but what their husbands could provide, or their fathers, if they had been unluckily in the look for. The novel seems to deal with the business of marriage.

Mrs. Bennet is an anxious mother of Bennet family. She has five daughters and she is always conscious for her five marriageable daughters with the problems of their marriage. She is from the middle class family and in search of a suitable prosperous son-in-law, a man with a good fortune for her daughters. Her activities show that her purpose of life is her daughter's marriage. Austen speaks her as:

“Her mind was less difficult to to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news.” (03)

The moments Mrs Bennet hears that the Netherfield Park has been let out by Mr. Charles Bingley. It is three miles away from her Longbourn House. Bingley is perfectly amiable, young man having an annual income of five thousand pounds. From the news Mrs. Bennet imagine him that he can be her son-in-law among her any daughters and she immediately tells her husband as:

“My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?”... “Oh single, may dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune: four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!”.... “how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.” (01)

Being a female character of family, she is destroying the happiness of her husband on the one side and hampers the ambitions of her daughters on the other. Her eager activity doesn't like her husband, Mr. Bennet. He always dislikes or ignores her wish to attempt her daughter's marriage to Bingley. In this respect Mrs. Bennet again insists her husband by saying: “Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves” (02). Similarly, she wish that if she can make Mr. Bingley a son-in-law among her daughter that it will easy for her others daughters marriage also. So again she expresses her wishes as saying: “If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield,” .... “and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for” (06). It shows Mrs. Bennet's activities eagerly concerned towards her daughter's marriage instead her husband doesn't like her effort till. She even cried by saying: “I am sick of Mr. Bingley” (04).

Although Jane and Elizabeth are greatly delighted to have their favorites, they sit through the visit without much visible embarrassment. But Mrs. Bennet invites them to dine at their place after a few days as:

Mrs. Bennet had been strongly inclined to ask them to stay and dine there, that day; but, though she always kept a very good table, she did not think anything less than two courses, could be good enough for a man, on whom she had such anxious designs, or satisfy the appetite and pride of one who had ten thousand a year. (270)

The worst instance of her vulgarity is her behavior on hearing the news of Lydia's elopement and later of her marriage. Not having the sense to understand this scandalous episode in its full significance, she bursts into intemperate joy on hearing of Lydia's marriage and thinks of how to celebrate it gorgeously. In this respect Austen speaks:

No one but Mrs. Bennet, regretted that their stay would be so short; and she made the most of the time, by visiting about with her daughter, and having very frequent parties at home. These parties were acceptable to all; to avoid a family circle was even more desirable to such as did think, than such as did not. (252-53)

At last, after her daughter Elizabeth's marriage with Mr. Darcy, owner of the Pemberley Estate with an annual income of ten thousand pound a year, she feels so happy and says with crying:

“My dearest child”...“ I can think of nothing else! Ten thousand a year, and very likely more! Tis a good as a Lord! And a special license. You must and shall be married by a special license. By my dearest

love, tell me what dish Mr. Darcy is particularly fond of, that I may have it tomorrow.” (304)

The extract shows the view of Mrs. Bennet that her goal is now fulfilled by her daughter's marriage with the expected son-in-law.

*Pride and Prejudice* presents a pathetic female character, Miss Caroline Bingley, whose only object in life seems to be her acceptance by Darcy as his wife. She is desperate and mad in her effort to win Darcy, the hero of the novel as well as he is the owner of a Pemberley Estate with an annual income of ten thousand. She feeds him with flattery, praises his sister, his estates, his knowledge, his tastes, in fact, everything down to his ease and quickness of writing. At Netherfield she tries to influence him by reading with him as Austen remarks:

Miss Bingley's attention was quite as much engaged in watching Mr. Darcy's progress through *his* book, as in reading her own; and she was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question, and read on. At length, quite exhausted by the attempt to be amused with her own book, which she had only chosen because it was the second volume of his, she gave a great yawn. (44)

After that she fails to attract Darcy's attention, she stops reading a book and starts pacing the room up and down so that Darcy might observe her and be attracted by her graceful presence. But she does not succeed and ultimately asks Elizabeth as to what to do. And Elizabeth sarcastically remarks:

“Nothing so easy, if you have but the inclination,” . . . “We can all plague and punish one another. Teaze him – laugh at him. – Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done.” (45)

After failing in her attempts to get Darcy as her husband, she thinks that she should not lose the opportunity of visiting Darcy's grand Pemberley House, by conciliating Elizabeth for the favor of being accepted as a friend. All this further alienates Darcy from her.

At last Miss Bingley is greatly displeased with Darcy for having married Elizabeth, but in due course they get reconciled and continue good relations with Darcy. Austen's remarks for Miss Bingley as:

Miss Bingley was very deeply mortified by Darcy's marriage; but as she thought it advisable to retain the right of visiting at Pemberley, she dropped all her resentment; was fonder than ever of Georgiana, almost as attentive to Darcy as heretofore, and paid off every arrear of civility of Elizabeth. (311)

Charlotte Lucas, an eldest daughter of Sir William Lucas is quite conscious about the need of a practical marriage. Security rather than romance, according to her, should be the basis of marriage. She says:

Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance. If the dispositions of the parties are ever so well known to each other, or ever so similar before hand, it does not advance their felicity in the last. They always continue to grow sufficiently unlike afterwards to have their share of vexation; and it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life." (17)

The moment Collins pays a secret visit to Charlotte, proposes to her and is accepted with the permission of her parents. Charlotte asks Collins not to disclose the news to the Bennet sisters. Charlotte is thus practical and clear-sighted and not romantic and idealistic like her friend, Elizabeth, in matters of marriage. The Lucas

family feels happy to have a guarantee for Charlotte's economic security even at the cost of sacrificing her to a fool as on Austen's mouth:

Sir William and Lady Lucas were speedily applied to for their consent; and it was bestowed with a most joyful alacrity. Mr. Collin's present circumstances made it a most eligible match for their daughter, to whom they could give little fortune; and his prospects of future wealth were exceedingly fair. Lady Lucas began directly to calculate with more interest than the matter had ever excited before .... The whole family, in short were properly overjoyed on the occasion. (100)

Similarly, Elizabeth feels surprise for the news of their marriage as: "Engaged to Mr. Collin! My dear Charlotte, - impossible" (102). And Charlotte replied her as: "Why should you be surprised, my dear Eliza? – Do you think it incredible that Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he was not so happy as to succeed with you?" (102).

Lady Catherine is a sister of Darcy's mother and owner of Rosings estate and vast property in Hunsford as well. She is the most revolting of the character, who appear in the novel. She is conscious about her only one daughter, whom she dreams of giving in marriage to her nephew Darcy. So that the two rich houses of Pemberley and Hunsford may be united. A week after Jane's engagement one morning she visits the Bennets. She leads Elizabeth off for a walk into the cops and wants to know if she engaged to Darcy, as she has heard. She formally declares that she has planned for marry to Darcy with her her only one daughter, lady Anne as saying to Elizabeth as:

"Let me be rightly understood. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to *my daughter*. Now what have you to say?" .... The

engagement between them is of a peculiar kind. From their infancy, they have been intended for each other. It was the favorite wish of *his* mother, as well as of hers. .... Do you pay no regard to the wishes of his friends? To his tacit engagement with Miss De Bough?." (284)

From the above speech Lady Catherine insisting Elizabeth that Darcy, her nephew is already engaged with her daughter. She further clarifies that it was also the Darcy's mother wish to marry them too, but she is not alive now.

She adds that considering the inferiority of the Bennets and the disgrace brought into the family by Lydia, a marriage with Elizabeth would be degrading from Darcy. As, Elizabeth says that she is not engaged to Darcy, Lady Catherine demands and assurance from her that she will never accept any such proposal from Darcy. Elizabeth curtly refuses to give such and assurance and Lady Catherine returns to her carriage in high temper threatening Elizabeth all the way and drives away.

Darcy writes to Lady Catherine informing her of his engagement with Elizabeth, Elizabeth writes to Mrs. Gardiner giving her the happy news and inviting her to Pemberley at Christmas, and Mr. Bennet writes to Collins in reply to the latter's letter of warning, asking him in his usual caustic manner to console Lady Catherine in her disappointment. Therefore, after the engagement between Elizabeth and Darcy happen, she tried to cancel it.

She considers herself the sole master of all things. She moves with an air of pride and thinks that everyone should have the same interest as she has. She has the presumption to imagine that Elizabeth would never dare to look high form marriage and therefore does not believe in the rumor. Lady Catherine is stupid and unmannerly. Her stupidity are exposed when on hearing about Darcy's engagement to Elizabeth,

she rushes to Longbourn to meet Elizabeth. So she is greatly displeased with Darcy for having married Elizabeth as Austen remarks:

Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew; .... she sent him language so very abusive, especially of Elizabeth, that for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, by Elizabeth's persuasion, he was prevailed on to overlook the offence, and seek a reconciliation; and, after a little further resistance on the part of his aunt, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself; and she condescended to wait on them at Pemberley, in spite of that pollution which its woods had received, not merely from the presence of such a mistress, but the visits of her uncle and aunt from the city. (311-12)

Austen successfully depicts the relationship of Jane Bennet and Mr. Charles Bingley in the novel. Jane Bennet is eldest daughter of the Bennet family. She is twenty-two at the beginning of the novel. She is a model of simple, sweet, village girl, who charms everybody by her quiet and unassuming manner. On the other hand Mr. Bingley is a perfectly amiable, rich young man having an annual income of five thousand pounds. Mrs. Bennet hears him "a single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year" (01). Jane Austen herself remarks him as:

He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, ....  
Mr. Bingley was good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine woman, with an air of decided fashion. (06)

The moments Mr. Bingley has been let by the Netherfield Park near Bennet's family Mrs. Bennet, a mother of Jane Bennet, who has five marriageable daughters



and is always preoccupied with the problems of their marriage, expect him as her son-in-law for any of daughters. She emphasis her husband to visit the newcomer by saying: “my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighborhood” (02). Mr Bennet teases his wife by pretending his reluctance, although he really wishes to make the visit. She again remarks for him as: “If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield,” .... “And all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for” (06).

Bennet family’s eager attempt finally makes Bingley to attend a ball at Meryton with Mrs. Bennet and her all daughters. Mr Bingley takes a particular fancy to Jane, dancing with her twice. Afterwards he genuinely loves Jane. Even when Jane falls ill at his house at Netherfield, he is much concerned and takes care for her recovery. Afterwards Jane is conscious in his relationship towards Mr. Bingley. She is true lover and so continues to love Bingley even when he appears to be out her reach. Bingley recognize her merits.

At the relationship grown in peak Jane and Bingley united together. Bingley begins to visit the Bennets very often. On one such visit he proposes to Jane and is accepted. Throughout their relationship the proposal and engagement are romantic. Their relationship is quite unrealistic. Mr. Bennet observes their engagement activities as:

“Jane, I congratulate you. You will be a very happy woman.” .... “You are a good girl” .... “and I have great pleasure in thinking you will be so happily settled. I have not a doubt of your doing very well together. Your tempers are by no means unlike. You are each of you so complying, that nothing will ever be resolved on; so easy, that every

servant will cheat you; and so generous that you will always exceed your income.” (278)

Similarly, Mrs. Bennet assures her daughter, Jane after their engagement. She is so happy to see them. She says her:

“Oh! My dear, dear Jane, I am so happy! I am sure I shan’t get wink of sleep all night. I knew how it would be. I always said it must be so, at last. I was sure you could not be so beautiful for nothing! I remember, as soon as ever I saw him, when he first came into Hertfordsire last year, I thought how likely it was that you should come together. Oh! he is the handsomest young man that ever was seen!” (278-79)

At last, Jane Bennet also remarks to Mr. Bingley after their engagement by saying: “He has made me so happy” .... “by telling me, that he was totally ignorant of my being in town last spring! I had not believed it possible.” (279)

Austen has been considered one of the greatest novelists whose novels are interesting for their social message. Austen through her novels has endeavored to shake the foundation of patriarchal society. There are both male and female characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. Though she presents the male character in the novel, still Austen focuses on female characters making their role weighty. Mrs. Bennet and her daughters are the most significant female character because they represent the powerful women of the novel. They have many roles and they succeed in all because of their awakening and sensibility towards their roles. Their awakened nature at the end of the novel clarifies their meaningful life in their society.

## Chapter IV: Conclusion

### 4.1. Awareness of Female for Good Fortune

Every individual desires for self identity and self-recognition. They want social, political, psychological, economic independence in general. However, identity also evolves out of the person's free actions: to think one own thought, to see and feel with one's heart and having no authority to govern over them. Female consciousness is awareness of females. Females are aware and able to understand in the related issues for their self rights, freedom as well as equality to males and they live meaningfully. The raising of female consciousness is process of making them self understand and care more about their ideas, feelings or opinion about social, economic, politics, life and so on. Austen depicts female awareness in *Pride and Prejudice* for their self and future regarding marriage and family to live meaningful life in society.

Feminism makes female more conscious in their social, economical, political, life and future. It is a struggle of womanhood. So feminists focus on the women's rights and their freedom. They do not agree with society's view upon them. It affects the world culturally, spiritually and economically. Austen might never have thought of the feminist cult that would so tremendously develop in later years. In *Pride and Prejudice* she makes aware women for their individual freedom regarding to matrimony and family to settle down the future for their meaningful life in society through the depiction of female characters; Mrs. Bennet, her daughters, and others. She focuses on women genuinely analyzing their life problems. She has highly contributed to the women's issue taking in the favor of the women. The arguments for the woman's reality are unforgettable therein. From the overall study of the novel, it

can be concluded that her utmost concern is centered to the women in relation to men and the society they live in.

During Austen's time, woman's conditions were pitiable. They neglected mentally, economically and physically as inferior beings. They were not allowed to go outside. The society wanted to keep women as object to entertain and please male. Austen, the true feminist of the time, created awakened female characters; Mrs. Bennet, her daughters and others, who gradually are awakened for their self-identity and self-recognition through the marriage with good fortune as well as the familial issues to settle down the future for the happy life in society. By creating such an enlightened female in this novel, Austen gives the message to the society that women by nature are not inferior beings, but the existing male oriented culture, value political system make them inferior. If women get the equal opportunity, they can be equal to male to develop their personality. Mrs. Bennet, a woman of silly vulgar type and narrow-minded, always be conscious about her five marriageable daughter's future for her meaningful life in society. She is always in search of a suitable prosperous son-in-law for her daughters. Being a female character she is extremely concern for her daughter's marriage issues, but her husband doesn't want so. She is also destroying the happiness of her husband. At last she is able to settled comfortably getting all her daughters married in wealthy houses as her wish. Elizabeth Bennet, a heroine of the novel, is always conscious about her sister's and herself future. She keenly judge of human nature. By her alertness in mind and heart, she rejects the marriage offers of different people such as Collins and Darcy politely but confidently. She appears to be quite inclined to prejudice in the beginning. But at the same time she is also flexible and capable of making compensation. When she comes to know of Darcy's innocence, she changes her attitude towards him and slowly love him. She

always warns her father, mother and sister for the familial issues they doing in wrong way. Being one of among the daughter of family she takes the great responsibility to her sister, Jane's treatments during her illness. So, her consciousness makes her family as well herself life happy in their society. Lady Catherine, owner of a vast property in Hunsford, is conscious about her only one daughter to her nephew Darcy, so that the two rich houses of Pemberley and Hunsford may be united. Therefore, after the engagement between Elizabeth and Darcy happen, she tried to cancel it. Miss Bingley seems a pathetic female character, eagerly conscious about the owner of Darcy's Pemberly State, with marry to him.

Austen's advocacy for women's social and economic rights is the matters of the feminists concern in novel. As a feminist novelist, Austen has intended to change her women's emotional and sentimental mentality by awakening the precarious experiences of women existence in a society.

Thus, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel where awareness of most of the female characters towards their self and future regarding marriage and family makes them live meaningfully. The happy family settlement of main characters in the novel is only possible through their consciousness. Despite of ups and down in the life of main characters they go for happy retire life. It is therefore the title of this thesis "Female Consciousness in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*" is justified.

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