

## Chapter I

### **Mrs. Reed and Jane: A story of Disharmonious**

The present thesis "Female subjugation over Female: A study of Interpersonal Relationship among the key female figure in *Jane Eyre*" explores the oppression and exploitation on women from the perspective of Feminist Theory. The thesis by drawing the basic assumption of feminism shows the relationship between Jane Eyre and her aunt Mrs. Sarah Reed. It shows how the attitude, behavior, and other relationships of the characters help in the exploitation of the females in the society. On the surface level, the novel *Jane Eyre* seems to be the documentation of the major characters of everyday life. However, a deeper analysis of the paper asserts that the discrimination in the society is deeper than it seems. The major theme of the novel *Jane Eyre* is the relation between men and women, women's equality, subjugation of women, patriarchal issues, the treatment of children and women, religious faith and religious hypocrisy, the realization of selfhood and the nature of love. But the present study analyses only the issues related to the domination of females not only by the male members in the society but also by the females.

*Jane Eyre* opens with the narrator the adult Jane Eyre, recalling her childhood experiences growing up as an orphan in the home of her unfriendly aunt Mrs. Reed. Jane Eyre is an orphan girl, both her mother and father died when she was a child. Jane goes to live with her Aunt Reed, who only takes her in as the result of a promise to her husband on his deathbed. Mrs. Reed treats her very rudely, and her son often beats and verbally abuses her. Jane grows up for many years unhappy, an overly mature, sad, sallow and un-childlike child. Finally it is too much for Mrs. Reed, Jane is sent to Lowood Institution, a charitable cheap and strictly kept school for clergymen's daughters. Jane attends this school for over eight years; after a couple of

years, the standard of living at the school is improved. So in this novel it is frequently asserted that she is abused, ignored and exploited by her aunt.

Being a female, Jane had to struggle not only against gender discrimination and violence but also with the female character like her aunt Mrs. Reed. She was badly treated even by her aunt Mrs. Reed on the basis of gender biasness. As a female, she was mistreated everywhere. Not only the males in the novel are the oppressors, rather female characters appear to be the dominating agents. Female is equally exploited and dominated by female. Jane Eyre longed for her individual freedom within her own family but her dream of freedom is not only shattered by the patriarchal society but also the behavior of her aunt.

So, the paper works out to dig the problems faced by Jane Eyre not only in her family rather in the society as well. The researcher borrows the key concepts of Feminists like Virginia Woolf, Simon De Beauvoir and others for the completion of this thesis. As this study reveals the oppression of females by the females in the society through Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, in terms of feminist theory, it follows the theory of Feminists like Virginia Woolf's "*A Room of one's Own*", Simon De Beauvoir's "*The Second Sex*" and the like. These books on Feminism are the theoretical tools for the elaboration of this thesis. The fundamental goal of this study aims at revealing the difficulties and struggles of the major character Jane.

Bronte explores a variety of contemporary issues in *Jane Eyre*; such as the ill-treatment of children and the role of the church in Christian faith. Furthermore while the focus of the text is definitely on Jane's inner life and personal battles, the problems, she faces were similar to many real-life women who struggle to get an individual freedom in the society everywhere. Jane, the orphan heroine suffers, after difficulties in her early life, and falls in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester. This

research examines Jane Eyre's struggle against the various problems prevalent in the society. These problems include educational system, hypocrisy, humiliation and bigotry. The major character Jane is not only humiliated by males in the society rather females also dominate her equally. This revolt makes her the heroine, an independent woman and victorious woman. Hence, the present paper analyzes the novel from feminist perspective.

A critical lens of 'Feminism Theory' places the spotlight on the important ways in which the text aims at revealing the suppression and exploitation of women in the society. The present thesis also helps to power autonomy for the women through the central character Jane Eyre. This thesis also raises the questions like what are the inherent causes of oppression and domination to the females in the society. Why the females are exploited and dominated by females in the society?

The present research hypothesizes the main issue of psychological sufferings of the female protagonist, Jane and her dismantling condition in this biased patriarchal system. The politics behind the exploitation of the female is the traditional patriarchal system and its root causes. But, it is not only the patriarchy that is the cause of exploitation but it is the females themselves who are the agents for the exploitation and domination in the society. A woman is exploited for being poor, helpless, or carrying some social stigma in the society. Frequently, Jane has been dominated and exploited in her society which will hamper not only her individual development but also the holistic progress and development of the society. She, therefore, becomes indifferent and fragmented in family love and relation and she suffers from the recurrence of the nightmares of her own personal experience. She is dominated or exploited by her own aunt in minor issues. Mrs. Reed has done her best to make Jane's life miserable as possible. She despises Jane for being a poor dependent and

treat Jane as an outcast in the household. Jane, the female protagonist moves and had relationship with different people. Jane's multi dimensions personality is revealed only when she enters the male world that is Rochester, St. John and Mr. Brocklehurst. The relationship between Jane and Rochester in *Jane Eyre* is an intriguing, captivating and unconventional one, right from their first meeting. The issues of social class standing, social rules, gender roles and religion in the nineteenth century Victorian culture present as obstacles to Jane in her quest. In the novel Rochester is from higher class and Jane is from lower class. That is why class difference was a major obstacle in the romantic relationship between Jane and Rochester. Jane is aware that she is not considered as Rochester's equal, due to Victorian class prejudices and attitudes is reluctant to marry him at first because of this. It is only when Jane acquires a fortune, inherited from her uncle that is she able to marry Rochester as his equal. Similarly, the relationship between Jane and St. John is not harmonious because St. John wants to marry Jane not on the idea of love but on the idea that he has to because of obedience to God. Certainly a woman wouldn't want to get married under those ideas and motives. The more he pressures Jane, the further she goes away. She does not want to marry St. John due to his reasons and purposes. Jane has overcome too much and argues with him increasingly. Jane thinks finally and comes to the conclusion that she would and could be a missionary with St. John, but never as his wife. She is a true self as an independent girl and wanted herself identity and freedom. She also fought and try to assimilate and break down prestige of male-dominated society. Likewise the relationship between Jane and Mr. Brocklehurst is unpleasant because when her aunt told to Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane as a liar and deceitful child he has a very bad impression to Jane. In school he is misbehave to Jane. He treats Jane to secondary citizen. He gives punish for asking some questions.

In this way male tries their best to keep Jane in a subordinate position. Here, she refused such type of eyes and changes the position of female surrounding in the whole British society. She comes to search for her own existence and starts to protest and avoids the patriarchal norms and values.

There are many female characters in *Jane Eyre* among them some plays a good role or some of them antagonist. Some female characters play a role of helping or maternal mother figures. For example, Bessie and Miss Temple play very maternal roles and take Jane under their wings when she is wrongfully accused. Only Bessie, the housemaid at Gate wood, manages to sustain an ongoing relationship to Jane. Despite her minor role in the novel, Bessie is all the more important because she was the first mother figure for the Jane. She is only model of female kindness seen by Jane as a child. When Jane leaves the Reed household, she finds female role models that she loves. At Lowood School, she learns patience and forbearance from both Helen Burns and Miss temple. Throughout the novel, Jane encounters a number of women who offer her either positive or negative role models. Not all females are antagonist rather some female plays a role of maternal figure.

## Chapter II

### Rereading Female Subjugation in *Jane Eyre*

The present research aims to analyze the relationship between Jane Eyre and her aunt Mrs. Sarah Reed. Primarily the emphasis is laid on how Mrs. Reed, being a motherly figure behaves her niece an orphan girl. I want to interrogate how a woman behaves another woman in times of trouble. Being a female, Jane had to struggle not only against gender discrimination and violence but also with the female character like her aunt Mrs. Reed. She was badly treated even by her aunt Mrs. Reed on the basis of gender biasness. As a female, she was mistreated everywhere. Not only the males in the novel are the oppressors, rather female characters appear to be the dominating agents. Female is equally exploited and dominated by female. Jane Eyre longed for her individual freedom within her own family but her dream of freedom is not only shattered by the patriarchal society but also the behavior of her aunt.

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The novel begins in Northern England, where a ten year old orphan named Jane Eyre is living with her maternal uncle Mr. Reed. Reed, dies shortly after

adopting Jane. His wife, Mrs. Sarah Reed and their three children neglect and abuse Jane. Jane is blamed for the ensuing fight and Mrs. Reed locks her in the room. Obviously, Jane is exploited by male figures like: John Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester, St. John. Jane, in this novel is not only dominated and exploited by the male members of the society rather she is also exploited by the female members of the family.

Simon de Beauvoir explains the reasons for the pitiable condition of women in the society in her masterpiece *The Second Sex*. She writes, “No one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility” (143). She blames male for depriving female from the rights and duties. But even female themselves are equally oppressive over female. She even says that it is male who directly or indirectly hampers the progress and development of females. Beauvoir writes, “. . . her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly” (146). In this way males create their own world and they blame females for not knowing to adapt as the demand of males. In the same way, Mrs. Reed and John often dominate and exploit Jane without any specific reasons.

The relation between Jane Eyre and Mrs. Reed is not harmonious since Mrs. Reed appears cruel and unfriendly towards her niece Jane throughout her life. Mrs. Reed’s behavior resembles the role of the wicked step-mother of Cinderella or the wicked step-mother of Hansel and Gretel. Jane's early life can be defined as the classic Cinderella case beginning with Jane's orphaned state, which resembles that of Cinderella. Mrs. Reed and her children mistreat Jane as the wicked stepmother and stepsisters do in the fairy tale. The personalities of these characters are almost parallel. One of Cinderella's stepsisters is self-indulgent, another is strict and demanding, these match up with Georgiana and Eliza in the book. Michael M. Clarke

notes "*Jane Eyre* is the classic Cinderella: poor, despised, and mistreated. Both Cinderella and Jane are victims of the envy and cruelty of their society, Cinderella's stepmother and Jane's Aunt Reed" (132). For her both the characters suffer because of the hollowness of the society.

Mrs. Reed treats Jane with contempt like a servant. She even hates her husband because he loved Jane more than his own son. Without any specific reasons she becomes angry at Jane and do not hesitate to punish her. In the very beginning of the novel Mrs. Reed locks Jane simply because she fights with her cousin in a trivial matter. The fourteen-year-old John Reed enters the room and without provocation searches for his cousin Jane Eyre who is four years his junior. John blames Jane saying, "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent , 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"(8). This reveals that the reason Reed family isolates and despises Jane is because she is poor and orphan. It also establishes that Jane is in some ways outside of the social class system. It shows how she is treated as a subject of alienation and isolation. Mrs. Reed rejects Jane because in her eyes she is nothing but an orphan with no wealth she is affronted by her 'plainness'. She greatly favors her own children paying no attention to Jane's needs or wants. As the novel opens with the line:

She regretted to be under the necessity of keeping me at a distance; but that until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observation that I was endeavoring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were she really



must exclude me from privileges intended only for contended, happy little children. (1)

Mrs. Sarah Reed scolds Jane Eyre without any cause. Mrs. Reed is a rich, pretentious and condescending woman, and her children are terribly spoiled, cruel and rude.

Though Mrs. Reed is Jane's own aunt, but she is not treated well. She thinks that she is from higher class and Jane is from lower class. So, she discriminates Jane and loves her own children. She doesn't have any respect, love or honesty towards Jane. Jane is not welcomed as a member of the Reed household, at Gateshead Hall. She was born of a different class and is continuously being criticized for her behavior and personality by both the Reeds, and their nurse, Bessie. A comment by Mrs. Reed gives an indication of Jane's personality and her treatment. According to personal Narrative Group, "The interpersonal context revealed in women personal narratives suggest how women's lives are shaped through and evolve within relationships with others" (20). This fact is evident in Jane's lives since Jane's life is implicitly Bronte's life. '*Jane Eyre*' is the personal narrative by Bronte. In this novel the central character Jane and her struggle can be compared with that of Charlotte Bronte. Jane's life has been enormously affected by her relationship with Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed abuses and dominates Jane in any minor issues. She bullies and tortures Jane throughout her childhood or she just ignores her existence. She imprisoned Jane in the Red room as a punishment. She treats Jane with indifference because of her position as a poor, orphan girl, she has no wealth and no one look after her.

The personal Narrative Group further writes, "Personal narratives of non-dominant social groups (women in general) are often effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularistic rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of

the life that defies or contradicts the rules" (7). This idea is often revealed in the novel *Jane Eyre* where Bronte also exposes the domination and subjugation of females over male. It is clear that the women in Victorian age were not only dominated by the males in the society rather they were also dominated and abused by the females. Therefore the writers like Bronte felt necessary to reveal these issues in their writings. Hence, we can say that the life struggle of Jane in the novel is the representation of other females of the then society.

Mrs. Reed refuses to acknowledge her own children's vicious actions. She says, "Dear! Dear! What a fury to fly at Master John! Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there". Four hands were immediately laid upon me, and I was borne upstairs" (9). When John harasses Jane, Mrs. Reed does nothing to stop it. She just blames everything to Jane. One of the most significant conflicts between Jane and Mrs. Reed happens after Jane and her cousin fight with one another. Jane is blamed and she is locked in the room where Jane's Uncle had died. Jane feels that there is supernatural presence in that room. Still locked in that night, Jane sees a light and panics, thinking that her uncle's ghost has come. Here even if John commits mistake he is not punished for his mistake. She is blamed, scolded and even punished. She is locked in the room simply because she tried to defend what John told her. When she is locked in the room, she can neither defend the cruel behavior nor can she bear the tortures properly. Her imprisoning in 'red-room' re-enforces her inability to escape the Reed family house "through flight" or "through starvation." This choice occurs throughout the novel *Jane Eyre* and this notion is common for the heroines of nineteenth-century literature by women.

A particularly important theme in the novel is patriarchal society and Jane's efforts to assert her own identity within male society. Patriarchal means the male

domination in the society. To put it simply patriarchal norms and values are clear in the then society which is reflected through the novel. A society blames, scolds, and chastises females for the mistake but the same society ignores the mistake committed by the male members of the society. These gender roles are elsewhere found in the society. The binary oppositions are created and all the positive attributes are given to the males whereas the negative attributes are given to the females. Lois Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today* writes:

Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities, which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions, paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job, and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas as mathematics and engineering. (85)

In the patriarchal society it is not only the males who dominate and subjugate females on the basis of gender discrimination, the females are also equally responsible for that. The females also dominate and exploit males on very issues. The females try to keep Jane in a subordinate position and prevent her from expressing own thoughts and feelings. The social, political, economic and other various factors are responsible for that. In the novel *Jane Eyre*, Mrs. Reed dominates Jane on the basis of social status. Jane endures dreadful hardships, she is orphaned; her Aunt says she is "less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep" and invokes the wrath of God who "might strike her dead in the midst of one of her tantrums" (10). In the novel the protagonist Jane belongs neither to the upper class nor the lower class. She is placed in between

the economic classes. She is hung in between the other social classes. She endures injustice as she strives to be good, but is always condemned, while the faults of her cousins are indulged or ignored. Throughout the novel, she occupies the ambiguous class position. Her life travels from the class status of homeless orphan girl to upper class married woman. But the status of her life does not incline or decline rather it oscillates between these two economic classes. As Susan Fraiman writes, both Jane's mother and father were "socially ambiguous, and this ambiguity is part of their legacy to Jane" (616). Because Jane's father, a poor clergyman, married Jane's mother, a middle-class woman, they were situated somewhere between the two classes as a couple. Her father's education helped him to elevate himself slightly from the masses of poor people and her mother's marrying down lowered her from the class she had been born into. Therefore, when Jane was born she also occupied this socially ambiguous spot. Jane's class status becomes even more indefinable when her parents die and leave her as an orphan to be brought up by her wealthy Aunt Reed.

Jane Eyre confides her own fears, and feelings of anger, injustice and pain towards Mrs. Reed. She questions, why she is always the object of cruelty, suffering, accusation and condemnation continuously, with John's violence, his sister's selfishness, Mrs. Reed's indifference. During a fight with John she cut her head, she was bleeding but John's abuse was overlooked because Jane tried to remain away from him. She admits:

What a consternation of soul was of mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance, was the mental battle fought! I could not answer the ceaseless inward question – Why I suffer now at the distance of – I will not say how many years, I see it clearly. (13)

Jane is always the object of abuse because; she is completely different from and in discord with everyone else at Gateshead Hall. Neither party loved each other, nor Jane have the necessary personality, traits and physical appearance “ a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child” to be accepted and tolerated by the Reeds. Her own perceptive and experienced temperament is not acknowledged, instead, it is condemned.

Jane is ignored and punished by her aunt but John is forgiven for the same mistake which both had committed. Jane becomes furious for such discriminatory actions for which she revolts openly. After Jane is forced to hand over her book and stand by the door, she throws at her aunt the very book she had been reading, opening a wound on her head. Jane loses her differences as terror turns to anger. “Wicked and Cruel boy”, Jane says and then shows him his adult self. She says, “You are like murderer – you are like slave driver – you are like the Roman Emperor (8)”. Only a psychological but a social aberrance which it would be dangerous for her or other to resist. Indeed, one of the lessons Jane learns is that self-assertion always has a social as well as psychological force. The dominant society cannot be dismissed exactly, but alternatives society or communities within a society, can be sought and through grace and hard work. The outburst against her cousin John marks a beginning of seriousness in her life-narratives in which Jane faces the question of self-assertion.

In her book *Literary Women*, Ellen Moers first coined the term "female gothic" in 1976 to define what she called a genre written by women, centering on a "young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine." Moers's emphasis on the heroine's body is significant, for it signals a new theme in feminist criticism. Here the theorist Moers calls a character like Jane as a victim and at the same time Courageous heroine. This makes her a female gothic. Mrs. Reed

punishes Jane by placing her in 'the red room,' where Mr. Reed had died. Jane imagines herself surrounded and tormented. Even when she screams for help, Mrs. Reed is adamant. In the aftermath of the traumatic red room incident, Jane and her Aunt Reed have a fateful conversation. Mrs. Reed is angry at Jane; she tries to get her to confess to things of which her cousins have accused her. In this situation Jane can be taken as a persecuted victim. In the same way, she shows her bravery and revolts against the injustices cast upon her. She refuses to make her own life easier at the cost of a lie. She is very much furious and she bursts out saying, "I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty". (33)

Jane Eyre feels isolated and alienated because of the adverse relationship she had with her aunt Mrs. Reed. From the beginning of the novel we are told about Jane's isolation at Gateshead. She is an orphaned child after the death of her parents and is forced to live with her cruel hearted aunt who sees her as nothing but a poor beggar who should be grateful for her aunt's hospitality. Throughout her life in Gateshead, she often appears to be sitting by herself cold and hungry. Jane Eyre says:

I was a discord in Gateshead hall; I was like nobody there: I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed or her children, or her chosen vassalage. If they did not love me, in fact as little did I love them they were not bound to regard with affection a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them, a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them in temperament, in capacity, in properties? (13)

Jane, isolated and punished in the red room, reveals how rejected, unloved, and alone she feels among the reeds. Her physical isolation in the room reflects how emotionally

isolated she feels. In the same speech, she says that, in the Reed's eyes, she is "useless" and "noxious." The strong terms reveal how deeply and sharply she feels their contempt and disapproval. Considering Jane is only ten years old, and the preceding pages showed John Reed unfairly attacking her and unfairly punishing her, the passage adds to the sympathy readers feel for her. When Jane is reading the book *Bewick's History of British Birds*, John Reed enters the room started to bullied and punished to Jane once or twice a day. He tells Jane that she has no right reading books which he owns, then violently throws the book at her, from across the room. So, they started to fight each other. Mrs. Reed comes to the room and without knowing the cause of the conflict she locked Jane in the red room. She was bullied and excluded in the house. Jane is also put lower than the status of the servants so she doesn't fit in.

Virginia Woolf in her *A Room of One's Own* (1928) believes that women had always faced social and economic obstacles. She is also very conscious of the imposed limitations of her own education. In the same book *A Room of One's Own*, she explores deeper concerns on misunderstanding between the sexes and above all psychological conditions under which women were brought up. Looking at the pitiable conditions of women in the past Woolf portrays very pitiable condition of woman. Society had prevented a woman writer from writing openly. So, she had to write surreptitiously. "She must have shut herself up in a room in the country to write and been torn asunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps though her husband was of the kindest and their married life – perfection" (819). In the past, a woman writer was not taken positively and provided a separate room for literary creation. Her talent was not counted and valued; so it did not get ground to flourish. As a result, it ultimately turned dull and uncreative. In the same way Jane Eyre could not reveal her hidden talents

and caliber because of the oppressive and dominating society. She was locked in the room for no any specific cause. Jane is treated with indifference and cruelty because of her position as a poor, orphaned girl. She has no money and no one look after her. She is an outcast and looked down on by many others in the society.

Cold and cruel, Aunt Reed always treats Jane as an encumbrance inferior to a maid and takes her as a doll to show her hypocritical generosity. Eventually one day, when little Jane had an argument with her cousin she was beaten. In the face of Mrs. Reed, Jane refuses to be treated as an inferior being and finally speaks out against discriminations to her with sharp and cold exposure. When Mrs. Reed reproaches Jane for telling a lie out of all reason, Jane defends herself perversely: "I'm not deceitful. If I were, I should say I love you, but I declare, I do not love you. I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed, and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I" (32). Jane Eyre defends in this way to Mrs. Reed. Jane feels a great relief and freedom from having spoken with Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed looks very oddly at Jane asking her what is wrong with her, is she ill? There is a sudden change in Mrs. Reed, perhaps because Jane is leaving, perhaps because it is the first time Jane has spoken back with nerve. She tells Jane that she only wants to be her friend, and that children must have their faults corrected Jane screams that she is not deceitful, and that Mrs. Reed should send her to school soon. Much changed and frightened, calling Jane 'a dear' she says that she will.

In Jiang Qian's "A Comparative Study of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* from a Feminist Perspective", Thompson writes, "Feminism aims to deconstruct not only the opposition male/female, but all forms of social power, status, inequality and domination" (1). He says that it is not only the fact that males dominate women rather



it is females who dominate black, poor people and other minorities people in the society. The social power and status determines the existence in the society. This fact is evident in the life Jane and Mrs. Reed. Although Jane is her niece and lives under the same roof and shares the same kitchen but still she is treated as an outsider within her own family. This shows that the form of domination is not patriarchal rather it is the opposition of the forms of social power, status, inequality and domination.

Similarly, Haiyan Gao writes, "The goal of feminism is not only to achieve gender equality in all of humanity but also to enrich them. The basic premise of feminist theory is woman worldwide are under an oppression, discrimination and hierarchy state" (927). Bronte is an inspiration to feminists due to the way she highlighted and explored themes of gender inequality, oppression, discrimination that still explored in feminist theory. Gao says, those in the Victorian age understood women were treated unequally, despite their rank.

Jane should be thankful to her aunt rather than being rude. When Jane is about to leave Gateshead to the charity school, Mrs. Reed thinks she can make Jane frightened by her status and decides to give a hypocritical talk to guide Jane to express gratitude in front of others. But Jane refuses to be this rich lady's doll, being treated as unemotional and shameless. She retorts back straightly and powerfully:

How dare I, Mrs. Reed? How dare I? Because it is the truth. You think I had no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness, but I can't live so, and you have no pity. I shall remember how you push me back-roughly and violently pushed me back into the red room, and locked me up there-to my dying day. Though I was in pain, though I cried out, have mercy! Have mercy, Aunt Reed! (33)

Jane's rebellion against Mrs. Reed and John represents her feminist consciousness in getting esteem from other people as a decent and respectable person.

To a child, a mother is the sole source of comfort in a harsh and difficult world. In time of distress, the child looks towards her in hopes of reassurance and guidance. Without mothers, children may tolerate hardships with surrogate mother. In the present novel, orphan child Jane clearly shows the significance of the role that a mother figure plays in a child's life. Here, Mrs. Reed only cares for herself and her own children and she is abusive to Jane. Beginning with early childhood, Jane is immediately angry for being an orphaned outcast in the Red home. As a stock character, a representative of the evil step/foster mother, Mrs. Reed seems to have little redemptive value portrayed as a classic example of a woman to show an "unfeminine" lack of charity toward another female. Yet Mrs. Reed is endowed with motivations for at least part of her evil behavior; she confesses on her deathbed to have a feeling of jealous to envy toward Jane because of her late husband's love for the infant Jane. And, because Mrs. Reed is only a stand in mother figure, her afflicted motherhood is mitigated by the fact that she is Jane's caretaker and not her biological mother.

Here, Jane is also an example of woman oppressed, yet she finds ways to break free of that which confines her. The family structure and our school systems are two of the first places where children learn about themselves. Susan Moller Okin argues that family life is the first factor that has an influence on the socialization of the children. Her concerns about the subjugation of women center around the opinion that, "gender structured marriages make women vulnerable" (5). Both Susan Moller Okin and Mary Wollstonecraft would echo those statements, and undoubtedly place much of the blame on education systems and the family structure. Without equality in

those two arenas, it will be impossible to create an equal and just society. The discrimination in the society is also caused by the education system and the family structure. It can be found in the novel too. John throws away Jane's book while she was there in her study room. She was deprived of her rights. She was neglected and abuse by the family member. She can face many hardships and betrayal of the people who are supposed to be her family.

Jane finds herself dominated and exploited by other family members of the family. The other family members try to keep Jane in a subordinate position and prevent her from expressing own thoughts and feelings. She either escapes or rejects those cruel activities done to her. She is laughed at and condemned by others. So, the relationship between Jane and her aunt Mrs. Reed had always been unpleasant. An example of this from the text would be:

Well might I dread, well might I dislike Mrs. Reed; for it was her nature too wound me cruelly; Now, uttered before a stranger, the accusation cut me to the heart; I dimly perceived that she was already obliterating hope from the new phase of existence which she destined me to enter. I felt, though I could not have expressed the feeling, that she was sowing aversion and unkindness along my future path. (30)

Jane describes the abusive relationship she has with Mrs. Reed. Jane responds to the negative comments that Mrs. Reed made about Jane's character to Mr. Brocklehurst. The fact that Mrs. Reed cannot even let Jane start fresh at Lowood school shows how vindictive and hateful she is towards Jane. Here, Jane considers how Mrs. Reed's continued abuse has effects stretching into the future. Mrs. Reed's hatred was so intense that even Jane Eyre started treating her indifferently. Mrs. Reed and Jane Eyre relationship was not good because Mrs. Reed is cold and hateful to Jane and ignores

how Jane is abused by her spoiled son. She also adds to the abuse by calling Jane a liar. She neglects and abuses Jane at home and then banishes her to Lowood School.

I am glad you are no relation of mine: I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty. (33)

Jane Eyre says that she too has the emotions and sentiments as like that of others. She even remembers those moments when she was locked and kept isolated. This is her emotional outburst. In the passage Jane solidifies her own orphan hood. She displays a keen sense of justice and recognition of her need for love and affection. Along with familial liberation, the passage marks Jane's emotional liberation. Jane's imprisonment in the red room has its psychological counterpart in her emotional suppression, and it is not until she speaks these words to Mrs. Reed that she feels her "soul begin to expand."

Her echoing words "People think that you are good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. You are deceitful! (33)" makes it clear that how much she hates Mrs. Reed. She was compelled to reveal these things only because of her hatred and her exploitation to her. This is the breaking point. Jane has the opportunity to go away to school, and she looks forward to this as an escape to a new life. Right before Jane goes, Mrs. Reed tells the visiting school official Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane is a liar, and he promises to tell all of the teachers about Jane's lying nature. Mr. Brocklehurst therefore has a very bad impression to Jane. He treats Jane to secondary citizen and misbehaved to Jane. This is too much for ten year old Jane to take. So, the relationship between Jane and her aunt Mrs. Reed was always been unpleasant.

Obviously, Jane is exploited by male figures in the novel. However, I argue that Jane is equally dominated by the female member in minor issues. She is dominated or exploited by their own cousins and Aunt. Though they are women they cannot understand Jane feelings. They always misbehave and treat Jane as inhuman being. She is deprived of every kind of rights and facilities in the family. She is marginalized to the bottom of the family. Her aunt and her cousins consider her to be of lower class so, they treat her like she is worthless. The two cousins Eliza and Georgiana are taught to see Jane as unequal to them because of their mother's prejudice. They are abusive to Jane and making her life miserable. Jane has very bad impression towards her cousins because her cousins cannot help her in any difficult situation. They always mistreated to Jane very cruelly and badly. So, she says, "Eliza was headstrong and selfish. Georgiana had a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, a captious and insolent carriage, was universally indulged" (12).

Tyson (2006) writes: "For some Marxists, realism is the best form for Marxist purposes because it clearly and accurately represents the real world, with all its socioeconomic inequalities and ideological contradictions, and encourages readers to see the unhappy truths about material/historical reality" (66). The novel revolves around a female protagonist named Jane Eyre who is an orphan living in her cruel aunt Mrs. Reed. From the very start, there is a clear hierarchy of the upper and lower class. Mrs. Reed and her three children, John Reed, Georgiana and Eliza belong to the rich and upper class. Jane Eyre, being an orphan and dependent, belongs to the lower class. Mrs. Reed's cold behavior towards Jane leads her to believe that "she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children." (5). It is this hierarchy of socioeconomic standards that determines how the Reed

family behaves towards Jane. Even the servants of the household Bessie attempt to teach Jane this hierarchy of haves and have-nots.

And 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.

They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them (11).

The housemaid tell Jane that if she does not act humble with the Reeds, God will punish her. Clearly, everyone in the Reed household except for Jane has fully indulged in the ideology that those who are rich may do as they please, while the poor need to be taught severely of their limitations and boundaries. Thus, Jane wonders "why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, forever condemned?" (18). Her lack of money and status earns her everyone's cruelty. Thus, *Jane Eyre*, which portrays the Victorian upper class, attempts to dismantle the capitalist, religious and sexist or patriarchal ideologies prevalent in that time period.

Similarly, in patriarchal society female is not suppressed or exploited by male rather female also misbehaves or oppressive over female. This is exemplified in *Jane Eyre*. This thesis revolves around how Jane is exploited by her aunt Mrs. Reed. Many feminists are talking about women's right, discrimination, freedom and equality but in reality women were suppressed or oppressed by female member in the society. In the novel also Jane is suppressed or discriminated by her own aunt Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed doesn't give any parental care to Jane rather she discriminate between Jane and her three children. She only cares for herself and her children. She bullies and tortures Jane throughout her childhood, or she just ignores her existence. She refuses to acknowledge her own children's vicious actions and blames everything on Jane. She imprisoned Jane in the red room as a punishment. Eliza and Georgiana are Jane

cousins. Jane has very bad impression towards her cousins because both of them cannot help Jane in any difficult situation. They abuse Jane physically, emotionally and spiritually. Though they are women they cannot find another women trouble rather they support their cruel mother. So, the relationships she had with them were not the best. She deeply despised her aunt and cousins. Jane isn't treated like family, which makes her situation worse, being that she is being mistreated by family.

Jane Eyre has said these feelings to Mrs. Reed, who accuse her of being a liar in front of Mr. Brocleyhurst, who is obviously someone important at Lowood. She can tell Mrs. Reed is just making harder for her at her new school.

You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back roughly and violently thrust me back into the red room, and locked me up there, to my dying day; though I was in agony; And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions, this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard hearted. You are deceitful!

(33)

Jane Eyre says the following to Mrs. Reed. After Jane and Mrs. Reed's meeting with Mr. Brockleyhurst of Lowood School Jane confronts Mrs. Reed regarding the callous and cruel way she treats Jane. In this moment Jane releases all of her feelings about Mrs. Reed's mistreatment over the years, and her outspoken nature starts to solidify. Jane is really upset that Mrs. Reed accuses her of being a liar in front of Mr. Brockleyhurst, who is obviously someone important at Lowood. She can tell Mrs. Reed is just making things harder for her at her new school. When Jane knows that Mrs.

Reed is a liar person she disowns her aunt says she'll never come to see her as an adult and that she'll tell everyone how badly Mrs. Reed treated her. Jane describes how Mrs. Reed treated her in the red room episode, and shows Mrs. Reed her own cruelty and deceitfulness. Jane Eyre had severe rage towards her aunt because of her cruel nature. She, therefore says, "I had once vowed that I would never call her aunt again: I thought it no sin to forget and break that vow now. My fingers had fastened on her hand that laid outside the sheet" (212).

In the above extract Jane Eyre releases her anger and frustration towards Mrs. Reed. When Jane's parents died, Uncle Mr. Reed took Jane in as his own child. After Mr. Reed died prematurely, Jane became Mrs. Reeds charge. Growing up, Mrs. Reed despised Jane, for reasons that Jane and the reader only speculate. Mrs. Reed keeps from Jane that her uncle John Reed had wanted to adopt her in childhood. Even on her deathbed, Mrs. Reed does not reconcile with Jane. Jane forgives Mrs. Reed on her deathbed for all the cruelty that she has dealt her, despite nursing childhood wounds and memories of the traumatic Red room.

Jane Eyre was so fed up with her aunt that she frequently complained about the behavior of her aunt. Although she lived with her aunt but she was very much obsessed with her aunt Mrs. Reed. And even after hearing that Mrs. Reed is in her death bed, she could remember the cruel behavior her aunt had with her. She says:

She regarded me so icily, I felt at once that her opinion of me her feeling towards me was unchanged and unchangeable. I knew by her stony eye opaque to tenderness, indissoluble to tears that she was resolved to consider me bad to the last; because to believe me good would give her no generous pleasure; only a sense of mortification.

(234)



Jane is recalling her experience while visiting Mrs. Reed on her deathbed. Many years have passed since the two last met. Even though Jane is ready to forgive and forget the bitterness between them, Mrs. Reed shows her character to be "unchangeable." Since Mrs. Reed prefers her own children to Jane this additionally insinuates a negative relationship between Jane and her aunt. Mrs. Reed eventually cannot stand Jane's presence anymore and sends her off to Lowood School so she will no longer have to deal with her. After Jane leaves Lowood and becomes a governess, she receives a message saying that Mrs. Reed is on her deathbed and is asking for Jane. When Jane arrives she encounters the scene depicted above. Jane realizes that even on her deathbed, Mrs. Reed will never love Jane nor like her in the slightest. Mrs. Reed, unlike many other characters in the novel, does not change at all. So, Jane says that, "Poor, suffering woman! It is too late for her to make now the effort to change her habitual frame of mind; living, she had ever hated me dying, she must hate me still (220)".

Jane finally accepts that Mrs. Reed will never change and will show hatred for Jane even in death despite Jane's gracious forgiveness. Jane's resignation comes only moments after Jane found out that Mrs. Reed kept the truth about Jane's uncle and relatives from her. The consequences of character are revealed in the contrast between Jane's balanced and open nature. And Mrs. Reed's negative and cruel outlook Hatred and betrayal caused more suffering for Mrs. Reed than Jane.

The novel changed the route of the female literary tradition that was in its beginning, for Charlotte creates a heroine with a mind of her own, of independent spirit, and in search for economic, professional and emotional satisfaction, and a hero that treats women the way they would like to be treated, that is, as equals. Jane Eyre became a symbol of what meant to be a young, single girl growing up, developing

herself and getting mature as an individual, as a professional and as a woman in the Victorian Age, mainly because “the typical individual of the new social order, as Charlotte’s heroines again reveal, was self-seeking and hard-headed, yet fragile and desperately exposed” (Eagleton, 8). However, the Victorian public was not ready to see these features in a heroine, especially in a novel written by a woman, and mainly a heroine that when called “angel” by her beloved Mr. Rochester says that she would rather be a thing than merely an angel.

The seeking for equality is important theme through Jane’s struggle for self-realization as a feminist. People in Victorian age have the idea that people are not born equally, people in high rank despise people in low rank and men are superior to women. Even the women in high rank and status dominate the woman of poor economic status. Consequently, women like Jane are treated unequally in every field. When Jane realizes the unfair situation, she rebels constantly for the basic right of equality. It reflects Jane’s resolution and persistence in struggle for self-realization as a feminist woman. Also the next theme in the book is true love. In all Jane’s life, the pursuit of true love is an important representation of her struggle for self-realization. Love in Jane’s understanding is pure, divine and it cannot be measured by status, power or property and so on. Having experienced a helpless childhood and a miserable adolescence, she expects more than a consolable true love. She suffers a lot in her pursuit of true love and finally she obtains it through her long and hard pursuit.

Hence, in the present novel *Jane Eyre* the heroine Jane is an orphan girl who is ill-treated at a very young age. She strives for her life, and forms a tough character. She learns how to live from her childhood’s environment. Also just for her growing experiences, it creates her strong personality, beautiful ideal and wisdom. Although she is dominated and exploited by Mrs. Reed frequently, but she is never daunted. She

wins the battle simply by enduring and revolting in different forms. Jane Eyre is a special image out of ordinary. She makes a life by herself, and dares to show her own voice. Under the pressure of life, she always maintains her self-respect by hard work, intelligence and tough individualism. She never gives in on her way. She pursues true love and is loyal and steadfast to her beloved man. Her kindness, intelligence, and independence attract the hero. At last she gets a perfect love. In this way the novel, Bronte's masterpiece set in the Victorian period ends happily.

### Chapter III

#### Mrs. Reed and Jane: An acrimonious kinship

Fundamentally this thesis answered how the interpersonal relationships among females rather than male, have affected the females' lives. In the novel, the relationship between Jane and her aunt is not harmonious. This disharmony is the result of Mrs. Reed's discriminatory behavior upon Jane. *Jane Eyre* a representative masterpiece about the revolution for women's/female individuality, exposes a stunning account of a young Jane's sexual and psychological self-discovery and violation of social, sexual and spiritual limitation for her absolute emancipation. Jane, the heroine, a real British Lady of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is allowed to disrupt the sacred institutions of marriage and contemporary British womanhood and to disregard moral concepts without repenting. Sub merged and subordinated. '*Jane Eyre*' represents a women's search for identity. Jane, the woman protagonist of the novel who is victimized physically and mentally by even the female characters and through her consistent effort female individuality and identity is regained.

In the society where Jane exists, women were for the pleasure and assistance of men, their role is complementary to that of men and they should fulfill their feminine thirst. It considers them 'different' from men and warns not to compete with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their identities, the social definition of who they are. It has rewarded them for the limited role of wife, mother and mistress, all of which are pleasing and beneficial to men. One who does not seek her identity through men, is a threat to its social values. But my thesis pointed out a second side of exploitation where female is not discriminated by males in the society; females are equally dominated and exploited by females in the society. Here in the novel Jane is abused by her own aunt Mrs. Sarah Reed and other members in the society. She is

dominated and exploited by her own aunt and her cousins. Mrs. Reed always discriminate Jane and her children. It is because of which Jane abandons her marital, maternal and familial roles.

If women are, the way they are, because society has made them that way, they can only change their life significantly by changing society. She therefore, takes many radical actions not only for destroying the set social values but also for establishing alternative values for women of their own. She rejects the traditional feminine role of 'mother-women' and reconstructs an alternative, oppositional role of a 'free-woman' which demands a female life with personal emotions, individuality and self-identity. In the effort of adopting her redefined identity, Jane discards the religious practices that suffocated her 'self' by violating her freedom; breaks the marital chain that binds 'her' wings of individuality. She revolts against all kinds of domination and abuses. She therefore becomes a female gothic, where she doesn't accept her traditional roles and regulations blindly rather she revolts these all. Although she is not respected and accepted in the family but also she seeks the emancipation and her freedom in her life. A poor, orphan girl, Jane is struggling for spiritual and physical survival and came to begin her life as physically and psychologically oppressed young girl. A female character like Mrs. Reed threatens and obstacles in many ways to her and says not to tell it to anybody. She only kills the old self to recreate a free from the doubts and fears imparted by the hegemony, and erases her subjectivity. She moved herself towards creativity, humanity and potentiality that made her 'a good girl', a Victorian coinage. She emerges from silence imposed upon her and finally she was able to place a distinct voice in her family and in the society.

In the patriarchal society marriage is one of the complexities which sometimes minimizes the effect of a self-identity of female. In the novel '*Jane Eyre*' Bronte

presents the situation in which female characters search their individuality and identity, but are beaten down and kept aside by the patriarchal society. Though Jane Eyre faces many difficulties and hardship with her aunt Mrs. Reed and her cousins she tries to preserve her identity. She is a true self as an independent woman. She does not lose her liberation, and challenges gender role set for female. By defending her all sorts of hindrances she used to establish her own distinct and peculiar identity, position and status as well.

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