

## **I. Introduction: Jane Austen, Female Self and *Emma***

This work of dissertation aims to explore the female self in Jane Austen's *Emma*, a story of a young, pretty, and smart girl Emma Woodhouse. Through the story of Emma Jane Austen basically draws the patriarchal society of early 19<sup>th</sup> century where women were restricted within the confined domesticated life of household activities. But unlike the typical female members of contemporary society Austen portrayed the radical, bold and confident female protagonist Emma. Emma tries her best to explore herself and her identity. She happens to be the reigning queen of her village's social scene. Thus, on one hand Austen chooses the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a setting of the text but on the other she foregrounds Emma as a radical and bold female protagonist unlike other females of contemporary scenario. By presenting this dualism between society and protagonist, Austen evokes the exploration of emerging female self in *Emma*.

This research work in particular tries to deal with Austen's most celebrated novel *Emma*, the portrayal of independent and outspoken women in the rigid 19<sup>th</sup> century social scenario. The overall circumstances of the novel disclose the condition of major woman character like Emma, Jane, and Harriet. Though, these women have internalized patriarchal norms and values and their superiority, they are not totally the puppet in the hands of men. Emma's masculine efforts are reflected in her deeds like matchmaking, deciding for Harriet's husband, choosing her own appropriate fiancé. Similarly, Harriet's efforts to marry a well respected suitor, Jane's secret engagement with Frank are the instances that problematize the roles of 19<sup>th</sup> century women. Thus, this research work will take the roles of these female characters in to the dimension of its study.

In particular this research work focuses on central character Emma Woodhouse. Emma has the world at her fingertips. She's young, pretty, and smart; she also happens to be the reigning queen of her village's social scene. Emma lives in , a small town about sixteen miles outside of London, with her aging father Mr. Woodhouse who loves Emma, but he is utterly unable to offer her any guidance – which is perhaps why Emma does not seem to have any sense of her own limitations. Life seems pretty sweet – if a bit boring – and so Emma decides to spice things up by taking on a protégé of Harriet Smith. Even though Emma has determined never to marry herself, she immediately decides to find Harriet a husband.

Determined to make Harriet into a gentlewoman, Emma sets out to refine Harriet's tastes – especially in men. She convinces Harriet to dump Robert Martin, the young farmer who likes her, and sets her sights on the town's clergyman, Mr. Elton. Unfortunately, Mr. Elton turns out to be in love with Emma – or at least with Emma's money. After the Mr. Elton debacle, Emma thinks that she has learned her lessons in matchmaking. But she the matchmaking for Harriet would be the due; she would find out a husband for her by hook or crook.

When the dashing Frank Churchill comes to town, Emma tries very hard to fall in love with him herself. She can not seem to fall head over heels for him, but she does manage to make a good deal of mischief by flirting with him in front of Jane Fairfax, a young woman who recently returned to to live with her aunts. Meanwhile, Emma decides that Frank might just be the perfect new man for Harriet. Emma's exploits are watched – and commented upon – by her good friend, Mr. Knightley. Although Emma frequently ignores his advice, she cherishes his good opinion. When Mr. Knightley accuses her of belittling her poor neighbors, Emma begins to reflect upon her mistakes and even starts to change her ways.

Unfortunately, Harriet confesses that she loves Mr. Knightley, not Frank. All of a sudden, Emma's plans crumble. She realizes that she loves Mr. Knightley too. Convinced that Mr. Knightley might be interested in Harriet, despite the fact that he practically lives with the Woodhouses, Emma crushes Mr. Knightley's attempts to propose to her. Eventually all romantic muddles are cleared: Emma marries Mr. Knightley, and Harriet marries her former suitor, Robert Martin.

The story of *Emma* is surrounded by side-narratives of life in , including the romance of Frank and Jane Fairfax, the marriage of Emma's former governess, Mrs. Weston, and the escapades of the social climbers, Mr. and Mrs. Elton. The entire world of *Emma* is the drama of female's upliftment into the position of the males in the then Victorian society. The overall circumstance of the novel discloses the condition of major women characters like Emma, Jane, Harriet and their respective husbands, these women have internalized and practiced patriarchal norms and values and their superiority over females, they are not totally the puppet in the hands of man. The novel is dominated by Emma Woodhouse, a young woman who possesses great social and personal advantages but no awareness of her limitations. Taking these issues from the text this research will explore the role of female in Victorian society and how they explore their self and identity.

Jane Austen (1775 – 1817) was an English novelist whose works are of romantic fiction. These writings set among the classics of English novels and has earned her a place as one of the most widely read writers in English literature. The biting social commentary of Austen has cemented her historical importance among scholars and critics. She is known for her gently satirical portraits of village life and of the rituals of courtship and marriage, but she wrote during the Romantic period, when most major writers were concerned with a very different set of interests and

values. Romantic poets confronted the hopes and failures of the French Revolution and formulated new literary values centered on individual freedom, passion, and intensity. In comparison, Austen's detailed examination of the rules of decorum that govern social relationships, and her insistence that reason and moderation are necessary checks on feeling, make her seem out of step with the literary times.

Austen lived her entire life as part of a close-knit family. She was educated primarily by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading. The steadfast support of her family was critical to her development as a professional writer. Her artistic apprenticeship lasted from her teenage years until she was about thirty-five years old. During this period, she experimented with various literary forms, including the epistolary novel which she tried then abandoned, and wrote an extensively revised three major novels and began a fourth. From 1811 until 1816, with the release of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816), she achieved success as a published writer. She wrote two additional novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, both published posthumously in 1818, and began a third, which was eventually titled *Sanditon*, but died before completing it.

Jane Austen and her works are generally considered representative of the late eighteenth-century "classical" world view and its values—judgment, reason, clarity of perception—those of the "Age of Reason." In its best sense, this is a moral world view, reflecting the values of the Enlightenment. Austen's values represent order in the face of disorder, but her concept of order embodies what is true, organic, living, not the static order imposed merely on the exterior, from "society" or "the church," for example. Austen's attitudes actually differ in subtle ways from the conventional manifestations of the classical attitudes and forms of the late eighteenth century--of

the excesses of classicism that the Romantics rebelled against so vehemently.

However, Jane Austen's novels can also be called anti-romantic in that they counter the extremes of the romantic imagination epitomized by the Gothic novels so popular during her time, and satirized by Austen in *Northanger Abbey*.

The ordered society in Austen's world is one in which people live in authentic harmony—socially, economically, emotionally, and ethically. Balance, order, and good sense exist in the face of too much sensibility; a balance of intellect and emotion, thought and feeling, outer and inner experience, society and the interior life, are the key to understanding Austen's schema of meaningful experience and right relationships.

Different critics have viewed the text *Emma* with various perspectives. In all of Austen's novels, the idea of truth, of perceiving the truth, is of supreme importance. Mark Schorer points out that *Emma* might have been called "Pride and perception" or "Perception and Self-Delusion" (98). The work moves from delusion to self-recognition, from illusion to reality; numerous images of sight and blindness reinforce this—the lack of sight, the necessity for insight. Emma's "blindness" to the real nature of Mr. Elton, of Harriet, Robert Martin, Jane Fairfax, Frank Churchill, Mr. Knightley, and of course herself, shows her unknowing errors of judgment, her fundamental lack of self-understanding. She is deceived as to the nature and reality of the world around her, as well as to the nature of her own emotions. When the truth of human situations and feelings is not perceived accurately, disorder and unhappiness result. Unethical, even immoral behavior is fostered through ignorance, and is only rectified when the truth emerges, allowing ethical behavior to predominate.

The novel *Emma* is a one of courtship and marriage. It begins with a marriage of Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, and ends with three others, as well as observing in

action those of Emma's sister Isabella and John Knightley, and of Mr. and Mrs. Elton, definitely a negative role model. According to Jane Austen, for marriage to be successful it must be an intrinsic part of, and connected to the fabric of the genuinely ordered society, and thus represent a true moral and ethical reality. We recall her well-known statement in a letter in 1814 to her niece Fanny Knight that "anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection. Nothing can be compared to the misery of being bound without love" (Qtd in A. Walton Litz 11), a point expressing a most basic value of Austen's view of marriage. It must never occur just to fulfill societal and economic structures, which would be highly unethical as well as lead to personal misery. Instead, there has to be genuine 'affection,' or a true 'attachment,' as she was so fond of saying, which engenders genuine ethical and moral behavior.

The marriage theme in the Austen novel is fulfilled by the 'good match'; society coalesces around the well-matched couple, and moral integrity, equality of being, and spiritual insights are the result. The characters become more fulfilled, and the heroine becomes what she should be in moral terms as well as in her personal happiness. The basis for a moral equality is found between the heroine and the hero, and in a sense a new order of society is formed, outside of and counter to the hierarchical, striving, and unethical elements of conventional society. In *Emma* Mrs. Elton represents this position to the extreme. Some who misread Austen may think that she merely endorses and reinforces the conventional structures of society, but such is not the case; the necessity for inner truth and reality is implicit behind the outer social structures. But Emma does not easily reach this stage of being, for she makes many errors of judgment in her journey toward maturity. For example, in her role as social snob, she is condescending and looks down on and inaccurately

perceives a character such as Robert Martin, but hers is a false perception of class structure. She fails to understand and acknowledge the fine qualities that would make him the right mate for Harriet, something Mr. Knightley knows all along. She strives too hard to “make matches” and in the process is mistaken and does wrong – even does ‘evil,’ in her convoluted matchmaking for Harriet: “there was still such an evil hanging over her in the hour of explanation with Harriet, as made it impossible for Emma to be ever perfectly at ease” (*Emma* 139). Her errors involve not only Harriet, but all the other major characters, including Mr. Knightley, and most of all, and most unknowingly, herself.

This is the dilemma of Emma to be a victim of her own illusions and creates a world of her own fancy, but it is not the real world, according to Andrew Wright, who notes Emma’s “supreme self-confidence and serene delusion” (135). Emma is so engrossed in herself that she radically misconceives even her own attachment to Mr. Knightley. Her fancy, her imagination, and her manipulation of people’s lives are all based on a false perception of reality, despite her grandiose trust in her own judgment. When Emma actually sees her mistakes and the harm they have caused others, as well as her, she finally begins to attain a new level of insight and maturity. The moral development in the novel suggests the need for the diminishment of Emma in the social sphere, a new position for her, but an appropriate place in the scale of value, rather than one defined by her self-aggrandizing ego.

When Emma grows in a moral way as a result of her recognition of objective truth, she evolves into a more integrated person, a better person, and in the process gains what is truly right for her as an individual. The significance of the moral aspects of the novel is addressed by Arnold Kettle:

The prevailing interest in *Emma* is not one of mere ‘aesthetic’ delight but a moral interest,” and Austen’s “ability to involve us intensely in her scene and people is absolutely inseparable from her moral concern. The moral is never spread on top; it is bound up always in the quality of feeling evoked. . . . [T]he delight we find in reading *Emma* has in fact a moral basis. (114).

In addition to understanding the novel as an in-depth study of a single character, its moral aspects can be viewed within a larger context, set within a more comprehensive scope—in relation to classical Greek tragedy; in the context of a Christian spiritual world view; in the comic tradition brought to its height by Shakespeare, and in a psychological perspective, particularly from the point of view of Carl Jung. In all of these approaches moral and ethical issues are implicit, and spiritual evolution is the outcome of the process of internal change.

The tragic fall occurs, and unhappiness, disaster, and complete disruption of the social order result. Happily, Emma and her friends are spared this fate, though Emma’s errors do create unhappiness, disunity, disruption, and mismatched couples. But led by Mr. Knightley’s patriarchal guidance, she realizes her errors; the plot is unscrambled and we have the delightful comic ending, with each person rightfully restored to his or her “true” mate.

Some critics have connected the text with the theme of Christianity. They regard Austen religiously loose. For this purpose they take the protagonist Emma in to the dimension of their study. Before this natural pairing can occur, however, Emma must experience what could be identified as the Christian cycle of sin, repentance, redemption, and grace. Religion and the church are not present as an overt positive influence in Austen’s novels; indeed, they are notable for their absence. Austen’s



novels lack religious or specific spiritual energy; rather, their power lies in the values, ethics, and moral force present in each of the works. *Emma*, according to Jesse Wolfe, seems “to argue a Christian ethic, but not a personal God” (111); it is a “secular Christian ethic. Such an ethic sees pride as the primal sin, and the human condition as fallen, i.e., inevitably self-centered” (117).

Despite the lack of conventional religious aspects, the values and the process of recognition of wrongdoing, and the ultimate insight that results, can be interpreted as traditionally Christian in nature. It could be believed that Austen was profoundly Christian in her value system, though she never directly calls it that, and that she understood the path of inner enlightenment in terms of Christian principles, though perhaps not in terms of spirituality in its highest mystical sense.

Emma has the advantage of wealth and social position, but Jane is the more highly evolved person. Emma is competitive with Jane and jealous of her talents, such as her excellent piano playing and singing. In contrast, Emma’s association with the undeveloped and dependent Harriet Smith may suggest her own intellectual and personal limitations. Allison Sulloway calls attention to “Emma’s intellectual poverty and other social deformities that have engendered her outrageous behavior” (135), and that perhaps explain her fixated friendship with Harriet. As A. Walton Litz points out, “Mr. Knightley speaks not only for the author, but for Emma’s heart,” and when he reprimands her, “it awakens part of herself and comes as the voice of her own conscience” (141). Thus, this rather pompous patriarch teaches Emma about herself, which is what he has been doing throughout her life. Mr. Knightley has the advantage of age, and thus perspective, a perspective both critical and rational, but also empathetic. It may be that with the integration into Emma’s psyche of a strong male influence—the masculine, or “animus” in Jungian terms—we can finally see the

emergence of an integrated personality in the character of Emma Woodhouse. But Emma will have an on-going challenge to maintain her new-found moral understanding; as noted by Jesse Wolfe, “salvation in Austen can only be partial. Emma’s pride never disappears. . . . The ego may be defeated temporarily, but not permanently” (115).

Analyzing the text of Austen, New Critics Wayne Booth wrote extensively on his studies of Austen and stood strong in his support of Austen’s masterful control of her narrative. His 1961 article, “Control of Distance in Jane Austen’s Emma” demonstrates the effectiveness of Austen’s narrative technique. In this piece, he speaks to her self-imposed difficulties in maintaining control of her narrative in this novel as she openly illustrates Emma’s flaws while at the same time keeping her heroine sympathetic to the reader. Booth states:

It is clear that with a general plot of this kind Jane Austen gave herself difficulties of a high order. Though Emma’s faults are comic, they constantly threaten to produce serious harm. Yet she must remain sympathetic or the reader will not wish for and delight sufficiently in her reform. Obviously, the problem with a plot like this is to find some way to allow the reader to laugh at the mistakes committed by the heroine and at her punishment, without reducing the desire to see her reform and thus earn happiness. (401)

Booth maintains that the solution to Austen’s problem of maintaining this sympathy was to use Emma herself as a kind of third-person narrator, reporting her own experience. He feels that by showing most of the story through Emma’s eyes, the author insures that we shall travel with Emma rather than stand against her.

James Wood examines the modern traits of the heroines from Austen's novels and discusses this innovative technique. He focuses on the continuing sophistication, in each of her successive novels, of the inward thinking of Austen's protagonists. Wood begins his examination with his comparison of Austen's heroines to modern characters since Henry James. He points out that they differ with those modern characters in that they do not change by discovering things about themselves, or what is best about them. Wood points out that Austen saves this free indirect style of consciousness for only her most important characters:

The inwardness of Austen's heroines is precisely what makes them heroic in the novels. This is measurable, because Austen maintains a hierarchy of consciousness: the people who matter think inwardly, and everyone else speaks. Or rather: the heroines speak to themselves, and everyone else speaks to each other. The heroines are the only characters whose inner thought is represented. And this speaking to oneself is often a secret conversation, which Austen almost invented a new technique, a precursor or modernist stream-of-consciousness, to represent. (26)

Wood finds the seed of stream-of-consciousness in Austen's writing. Again her novel shows that the main characters or the heroines only contemplate about themselves; this makes the reading clear and understanding easy. In this, Austen is different than James Joyce and Virginia Woolf but more clear than them, but she only uses it to show the inward feelings and reflections of some characters.

In this way, Jane Austen's *Emma* has been analyzed through different views and perspectives since its publication in 1816. Most of the critics analyze the text in connection with the Victorian period and Romanticism. They call it a romance penned

by a woman. Other sees the portrayal of Emma and the class consciousness of the time contradictory. They argue that how a free and liberal character like Emma can be so bias about the class; though it was a reality then, but the free and outspoken character of Emma does not fit the nature she has. The critics of twentieth century find the narrative style similar to the stream-of-consciousness used now. They see the Austen has sometimes used this technique for her heroines. Still some mark the Christian morality in the novel; but none of the critics has analyzed the novel from the feminist perspectives. The maturity of Emma, her challenge to the masculine built of the society and her search of identity has not been analyzed yet.

The late eighteen century and early nineteen century British society was rigid, patriarchal and masculine in nature. The existence of characters like Emma was only a fantasy then, but Austen presents bold and outspoken Emma who outwits all males in such social structure. Her effort to dismantle the masculinity to prove her existence via exploring her self is remarkable then, though not now. Despite the confinement of women inside the four walls under the patriarchal norms and values, Emma as a woman protagonist does stone grinding effort to explore herself to establish her identity. Similarly, Harriet and Jane also have control over their fate and future. They, though enlightened by Emma, try to search their identity for the exploration of the self which they succeed. Thus, the present researcher aims to show the women's effort to dismantle the masculinity demarcations for their exploration of the self in Jane Austen's *Emma*. So, this dissertation revolves around the female characters of *Emma* who are within the norms and values of early nineteenth century British society but act liberally; it would show the condition, their effort to obtain their self and the final achievement of their self. For this Liberal Feminism would be used as a theoretical modality.

Like many other movements, feminism is also a political movement which aims to enhance the status of women both in theory and practice. Female who were given less opportunities to forward their ideas through theoretical modes in the past, now they try to break the prevalent tradition that women are inferior in comparison to male ideology. They develop their own theory through which they establish their own position and status in the society. So, feminism defines women as the people who are either oppressed or suppressed by patriarchy of the freedom of self-expression. The growing feminist movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive, docile, and dependant individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men. Feminists want to achieve greater freedom for women to work, to broaden both women's self-awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men.

However, influenced by a great variety of theoretical emergences, feminism presently has been a broad concept which covers a broader scope and includes different aspects of humanity despite its focus on the entire issues of women. There are Marxist Feminism, Cultural Feminism, Radical Feminism, Psychoanalytical Feminism, Socio-Political Feminism, Liberal Feminism and so on. The focus of the present researcher is the liberal feminism introduced by Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter and others. Liberal feminism concerns the issue of equal rights between the sexes and freedom of women for their participation in public world beyond household. It emphasizes not for the revolutionary changes but for reformation and development of a liberal society supporting equal opportunity between sexes. The efforts of Emma to mix up in the world of the males with equal voices with them and her effort and encouragement for Harriet and Jane to uplift to the equal position with males in the society of in *Emma* shows how the females can

get equal position in the society with the co-existence of the male. For this and many other aspects liberal feminism would be used as a theoretical in this dissertation to uncover and discover the positions and exploration of the women in the novel.

To sum up, this dissertation encloses introduction in the first chapter, discussion of the methodology merged with textual analysis in the second chapter. The introduction includes general introduction of research and framework, the writer's introduction, her works and issues that she deals with in the texts, and the researcher's focus in this research. The second chapter merges the theoretical tool of liberal feminism with the exploration of self and identity of woman as mentioned in the dissertation. And, the last chapter sums up the entire research.

## **II. Analyzing the Exploration of the Emerging Female Self and Identity in Jane Austen's *Emma***

This dissertation aims to denote the journey of main characters towards their exploration of self and identity in Jane Austen's *Emma*. The male dominated British society of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century did not let any women to exist side to side with males. But Emma, the protagonist of the novel, makes a journey toward her self and identity making her equal with the males. She not only becomes equal, but also she lets other characters like Harriet and Jane to understand the equal position of the women in the society and act as per it.

*Emma* is a story of a young and charming lady Emma Woodhouse who lives with her father in . She is attractive, clever and wistful who is the talk of the society for her independent nature and liberal life. Although convinced that she herself will never marry, Emma Woodhouse, a precocious twenty-year-old resident of the village of , imagines herself to be naturally gifted in conjuring love matches. After self-declared success at matchmaking between her governess and Mr. Weston, a village widower, Emma takes it upon herself to find an eligible match for her new friend, Harriet Smith. Though Harriet's parentage is unknown, Emma is convinced that Harriet deserves to be a gentleman's wife and sets her friend's sights on Mr. Elton, the village vicar. Meanwhile, Emma persuades Harriet to reject the proposal of Robert Martin, a well-to-do farmer for whom Harriet clearly has feelings.

Harriet becomes infatuated with Mr. Elton under Emma's encouragement, but Emma's plans go awry when Elton makes it clear that his affection is for Emma, not for Harriet. Emma realizes that her obsession with making a match for Harriet has blinded her to the true nature of the situation. Mr. Knightley, Emma's brother-in-law and treasured friend, watches Emma's matchmaking efforts with a critical eye. He

believes that Mr. Martin is a worthy young man whom Harriet would be lucky to marry. He and Emma quarrel over Emma's meddling, and, as usual, Mr. Knightley proves to be the wisest of the pair. Elton spurned by Emma and offended by her insinuation that Harriet is his equal, leaves for the town of Bath and marries a girl there almost immediately.

Emma is left to comfort Harriet and to wonder about the character of a new visitor expected in —Mr. Weston's son, Frank Churchill. Frank is set to visit his father in after having been raised by his aunt and uncle in London, who have taken him as their heir. Emma knows nothing about Frank, who has long been deterred from visiting his father by his aunt's illnesses and complaints. Mr. Knightley is immediately suspicious of the young man, especially after Frank rushes back to London merely to have his hair cut. Emma, however, finds Frank delightful and notices that his charms are directed mainly toward her. Though she plans to discourage these charms, she finds herself flattered and engaged in a flirtation with the young man. Emma greets Jane Fairfax, another addition to the set, with less enthusiasm. Jane is beautiful and accomplished, but Emma dislikes her because of her reserve nature, and because she is jealous of Jane.

Suspicion, intrigue, and misunderstandings ensue. Mr. Knightley defends Jane, saying that she deserves compassion because, unlike Emma, she has no independent fortune and must soon leave home to work as a governess. Mrs. Weston suspects that the warmth of Mr. Knightley's defense comes from romantic feelings, an implication Emma resists. Everyone assumes that Frank and Emma are forming an attachment, though Emma soon dismisses Frank as a potential suitor and imagines him as a match for Harriet. At a village ball, Knightley earns Emma's approval by offering to dance with Harriet, who has just been humiliated by Mr. Elton and his new



wife. The next day, Frank saves Harriet from Gypsy beggars. When Harriet tells Emma that she has fallen in love with a man above her social station, Emma believes that she means Frank. Knightley begins to suspect that Frank and Jane have a secret understanding, and he attempts to warn Emma. Emma laughs at Knightley's suggestion and loses Knightley's approval when she flirts with Frank and insults Miss Bates, a kindhearted spinster and Jane's aunt, at a picnic. When Knightley reprimands Emma, she weeps.

News comes that Frank's aunt has died, and this event paves the way for an unexpected revelation that slowly solves the mysteries. Frank and Jane have been secretly engaged; his attentions to Emma have been a screen to hide his true preference. With his aunt's death and his uncle's approval, Frank can now marry Jane, the woman he loves. Emma worries that Harriet will be crushed, but she soon discovers that it is Knightley, not Frank, who is the object of Harriet's affection. Harriet believes that Knightley shares her feelings. Emma finds herself upset by Harriet's revelation, and her distress forces her to realize that she is in love with Knightley. Emma expects Knightley to tell her that he loves Harriet, but, to her delight, Knightley declares his love for Emma. Harriet is soon comforted by a second proposal from Robert Martin, which she accepts. The novel ends with the marriage of Harriet and Mr. Martin and that of Emma and Mr. Knightley, resolving the question of who loves whom after all.

This episodic and romantic novel bears many issues regarding the society, the position of women and their struggle for equality. Emma's constant struggle among the dominant and flirting males like Elton, Frank and Knightley shows the gaze of the males over females. But she is able to control all the males and get her choice at last. It forecasts the equal position of the women in the society which would come almost a

century later. Though the equality for all the women belated for more than a century, for the high class society it was near which we can trace in *Emma*. Feminism as a movement gained popularity and success in the 1960s, but there were many writers and thinkers who discussed about the equal position of male and female in the society.

Though masculinity and femininity are the biological distinctions, the hierarchy between the male and female, as the inequality among human beings, in terms of gender and sex, has been prevalent everywhere. The one is privileged and the other endures sorrow and suffering. These bitter realities are the commonplace conditioning of patriarchal societies. This inequality is a by-product of social values and the common consent of human beings which has created a gulf in between people and determined their places in terms of sexes. As males got upper hand in the culture and norms of the society, they began to enjoy it and subjugate their female counterparts. It became a political fact because one shaped their identity as the ruler and the other as the ruled. Right through centuries and ages this notion of patriarchy has determined almost entirely the nature and quality of the society, its values and priorities, the place and image of women within it, and the relation between sexes. This type of thinking and behavior caused women to be marginalized.

In our time, unlike the past when women suffered silently, but when gradually they began to discover their 'self' and the consciousness as women, they began to raise finger against the patriarchal norms and values. Since then, they did not sit idle. They went on struggling to bring back their lost rights and values such as freedom, language, and identity and so on. This quest of liberation for women, the struggle from equality and identity from bondage leads to feminist awareness. Emma's journey in the novel is also a journey from bondage to awareness. Time and again George Knightley chides Emma for her actions and behaviors but she firm and strong all the

time; she is on her the journey to get her identity. It is evident when Harriet rejects the proposal of Robert Martin on the advice of Emma, and Mr. Knightley condemns her for interfering the matter. He thinks that the couple would be the suitable one and Emma should not deteriorate it:

‘Come,’ said he [Mr. Knightley], ‘you are anxious for compliment, so I will tell you that you have improved her. You have cured her of her schoolgirl’s giggle; she really does you credit . . . I never hear better sense from any one than Robert Martin. He always speaks to the purpose; open, straightforward, and very well judging . . . I had no hesitation in advising him to marry. He proved to me that he could afford it; and that being the case, I was convinced he could not do better. I praised the fair lady [Harriet] too, and altogether sent him away very happy. (*Emma* 55-56)

Mr. Knightley is anxious that Harriet rejected the marriage proposal of Martin. Knightley suggested Martin to do so, but on the direction of Emma Harriet refused the proposal. By this Knightley is furious towards Emma, it shows how the males thinks that their every decision and opinions should be fulfilled, if there comes any challenge from female, they immediately loose their temper and *order* to implement it. But Emma is not a child, she has understood the notions of male, their dominant nature yet she is able to out win them.

The realization of male domination in the patriarchal built of the society paves the way for the suppression and oppression of the women if there is no realization and no one to correct it. But Emma has understood everything who is able to raise finger against such activities and to implement her decisions on the favor of the females:

‘Oh! To be sure,’ cried Emma, ‘it is always incomprehensible to a man that a woman should ever refuse an offer of marriage. A man always imagines a woman to be ready for anybody who asks her.’

‘Nonsense! A man does not imagine any such thing. But what is the meaning of this? Harriet Smith refuse Robert Martin? Madness, if it is so; but I hope you are mistaken.’

‘I saw her answer! – nothing could be clearer.’

‘You saw her answer! – you wrote her answer too. Emma, this is your doing. You persuaded her to refuse him.’ (Ibid 57)

It is natural that the males become angry when the females reject their marriage proposal in the patriarchal society. The proposal of Martin was rejected by Harriet and Knightley is furious to Emma, he thinks that it was the work of Emma; he does not bother that it is right or wrong, in the favor of a woman or not. But Emma has clearly realized the situation and condition of the males and acts as per it.

Therefore, feminism is not also awareness but also an experience. Generally it is a theoretical discourse advocating the rights of women and their political, social and economic equality with men. It is a doctrine redefining women’s activities and goals from a women-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex, a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices that women suffer because of their sex, and defend equal rights for women in a political, economic, social, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense.

It is evident that feminism and feminist criticism was taken seriously only when feminism as a political movement inaugurated in the late 1960s, struggled for social, legal and cultural freedom as well as equality for the women who were long

being marginalized by patriarchy. In the past, it was never easy for the female to read, write or enjoy their freedom. Chris Beasley points out for the feminist writer the western thought is “male stream” and thus its authority needs to be questioned (3). It means the western civilization is pervasively patriarchal, male-centered and male controlled, Beasley asserts:

It is from the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writings to the present, the female tend to be defined by negative reference to the male as an ‘other’ or a kind of non-man. By her lack of the identifying male organ, of male powers and of the character traits, they are marginalized in the patriarchy. (98)

Thus, the society had long enjoyed upon women humility and meekness that, in Christian term, paradoxically granted a new moral ascendancy and the historical development similarly grants a new moral authority to traditional feminine values. Even women are denied active role to play in life and this lack of their free will ultimately bound them to cling to the status quo as prescribed by the patriarchal society.

Most of the societies have their own power structures, and most of them are patriarchal. The issues like masculine and feminine are largely the cultural constructs. As Simon de Beauvoir puts “one is not born but rather becomes a women . . . it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which is described as feminine” (993). By this cultural process, the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational and creative, while the feminine has come to be identified to be passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional and conventional. Even then no one can escape from this cultural construct. Jane Austen herself could not totally get cut off from that male-dominated society, so her internalization of those

privileged values flow out of in form of laughter, mockery and satire on the women in her novels.

Liberal feminism focuses on the equal existence of the male and female in the society unlike radical feminism which dreams of superiority of female in the society, and are even against the marriage system, and the territory of women only. It longs for the co-existence of both sexes for the smooth running of the family and society. An important precursor of liberal feminism is Virginia Woolf whose opinion in various places meets to that of Austen and her characters of *Emma*, who rather than abusing the males as a militant feminist, decorates her own women's fictional world. Even, Woolf never adopts a feminist stance; she continually examines the problems faced by women writers. Rejecting a feminist consciousness, she hopes to achieve a balance between a male "self-realization" and female "self-annihilation" (822).

Woolf's central argument is that women do not have money and room of their own. They do not have separate space for anything. She admired the seventeenth century writers and eighteenth century novelists like Bronte Sisters, Jane Austen, George Eliot and others. The women need exercise for faculties as much as their brothers do. According to Woolf, literature is open to everybody; she opines that libraries can be locked but the freedom of women's mind can not be blocked. She has imagined a society in which man and women will come together in purpose and desire:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just like as men feel; they need exercise for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid restrains, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged low-creature to say that they ought to confine

themselves to making pudding and knitting stocking. . . it is thoughtless to condemn them or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or to learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for the sex.

(882)

Her minute observation on the female writers not only created a space for women but also made at the centre of awareness to the readers. Woolf's ideas clearly show that if women are not deprived of the facilities given to males, they would be equal to males in all aspects.

Jane Austen in *Emma* presents a world of a girl with full of freedom and the liberty to do whatever she likes. The success, the fortune and the process of self-exploration of Emma become successful because she has her own room as Woolf says. Emma's mother is already dead, her elder sister married and having no brothers, she lived alone with her father, and this gave her freedom which resulted her personality which is equal to any males. Austen delineates her character well in the very first lines of the novel:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little distress or vex her . . . The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much of her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her. (3-4)

Though Austen presents the liberal character with optimum freedom who would develop her self and identity later, she is skeptical about her freedom because she is also the part of the society which is male dominated which makes her thinking so. Emma's existence is a challenge for every males of the society and a role model for the females, yet there are difficulties for Emma to easily get her success; still she gets the victory.

Emma begins her journey by making a suitable match for her governess Miss Taylor with a widower Mr. Weston. This success gives her much satisfaction, but her father does not like the match. Similarly Mr. Knightley does not think that the credit of match making should go her. Emma's father Mr. Woodhouse is an old man who represents the male superiority of the society; for him to see Miss Taylor as Mrs. Weston is difficult and he does not welcome the situation warmly:

He [Mr. Woodhouse] was a nervous man, easily depressed; fond of everybody that he was used to, and hating to part with them; hating change of every kind. Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable; and he was by no means yet reconciled to his own daughter's marrying, nor could ever speak of her but with compassion, when he was now obliged to part with Miss Taylor too; . . . he was very much disposed to think Miss Taylor had done as sad a thing for herself as for them, and would have been a great deal happier if she had spent all the rest of her life at Hartfield. (5-6)

Mr. Woodhouse is a male chauvinist who wants to make everyone around him, only for his convenience. On one hand, he disapproves the marriage of Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston; on the other hand he is against the marriage of his own daughter Emma



only because he would have to live uncomfortable life. He does not have any care for the girl; rather he is within the circle of his own happiness.

The matchmaking for Emma is a work of proud, she is proud of her matchmaking between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston. She hopes that she continues the matchmaking for others as she has decided that she will never marry. She shares her satisfaction and success of matchmaking with Mr. Knightley:

‘And you have forgotten one matter of joy to me,’ said Emma, ‘and very considerable one – that I made match myself. I made the match, you know, four years ago; and to have it take place, and be proved in the right, when so many people said Mr. Weston would never marry again, may comfort me for any thing.’ (9)

Emma is happy that she made a suitable match between Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston which she shares with Knightley, but he is not ready to give her any credit for matchmaking. Emma, as she mentioned, had made the match four years ago and it took place now only, for that no one had any hope, yet it became reality. But this success and the right action of Emma is not justified by the males, neither Mr. Woodhouse nor Mr. Knightley approve and support. Knightley comes one step forward and crumbles all the happiness and satisfaction of Emma, he is a true follower of patriarchal values of society and dismisses the task of a female:

‘I do not understand what you mean by “success”,’ said Mr. Knightley. ‘Success supposes endeavor. Your time has been properly and delicately spent, if you have been endeavoring for the last four years to bring about this marriage. But if, which I rather imagine, your making the match, as you call it, means only your planning it, your saying to yourself one idle day, “I think it would be a very good thing for Miss

Taylor if Mr. Weston were to marry her,” and saying it again to yourself every now and then afterwards, - why do you talk of success? Where is your merit? What are you proud of? – you made a lucky guess; and *that* is all that can be said. (10)

Knightley is not ready to give Emma any credit for the marriage, he thinks that she did guess properly; she thought that the match of Taylor and Weston would be a good one but she did nothing because she could do nothing. It is just a chance that what Emma thought came to exist; she is entirely out of it and its credit, the matter of success. Knightley does not think Emma have done anything; his thinking is guided by the male ideology, the superiority of male over female.

Another prominent feminist Mary Wollstonecraft laments for women being exploited in the hand of the male. In “Vindication of Rights of Women”, she discusses the pernicious impact of the sentimental novels in the lives of women in the eighteenth century. These novels present the women as passive beauty and lacking intellectual faculty. While the male is presented as active, intellectual, rational and dominant in decision-making, the women lacks the power in decision-making. Therefore she chooses a rake, luxury and a brave person; she directly states:

Women are solely employed either to prepare themselves to excite love or actually putting their lessons in practice, they cannot live without love. But when a sense of duty or fear of shame, obliges them to restrain this pampered desire of pleasing beyond certain length, they [female] obstinately determine to love . . . they become abject wooers and fond slaves. (397)

Projecting women as mere pleasure object, Wollstonecraft is severely attacking the social construction of prejudiced patriarchy, which trivializes females. If the

education and socialization of women is similar to men, there would not be any differences between them.

The stereotypical images based on limited experiences of one time but accepted as true ever after serve the great purpose of the men in subjugation of the women. These stereotypical images of women are stamped and circulated as truths have been destructive too the self images and esteem of women. These myths and stereotypes function as social norms, and direct the attitudes and conducts of both the male and females in the society. What is problematic with the female stereotype is that it forces, rather indoctrinates in many instances, the women not only appear and accept that they are substandard, but to become substandard so that they can gain approval of the society as the embodiment of idea.

Limited education, experience, and critical faculties deemed ideal for women because they are not expected to be wise in the ways of the world, or to compete with the men along with the demand that women be delicate and attractive body to be desirable for male consumption, and countless other collude in the masculine mega scheme of persuading the women to believe the myth and act accordingly. Explaining how much pressure such myths, stereotypes and curbs exert upon female in twisting and narrowing their intellectual and moral qualities, Wollstonecraft writes:

Females, in fact denied all political privileges, and not allowed, as married women, excepting in criminal cases, a civil existence, have their attention naturally draw from the interest of the whole community to that of the minute parts through the private duty of any other member of society must be very imperfectly performed when not connected with the general good. The mighty business of female life is to please, and restrained from entering into more important concerns

by political and civil oppression, sentiments become events, reflections deepens what it should, and would have effaced, if the understanding had been allowed to take a wide range. (389)

Women are deprived of the right to natural expression of psychological and physiological needs and drives. They are expected to live up to the images men have conjured about them. This all eventually creates a diseased and unnatural personality in women. The influence of stereotypes and the need to live accordingly destroys the humanity in females.

The character of Emma in Jane Austen's *Emma* is a carefree and independent. She does whatever pleases her; she is par the female characters of her time who were deprived of any civil visit, meetings with males and outspoken personality. However, Emma lacks some personal traits; she is impatient and hastily guesses many things depending on any unrelated and indifferent fact. This makes Emma vulnerable at the beginning. In one of such incidents, Emma unrealistically makes opinion about Jane Fairfax. She is an orphan who was reared by a friend of her father Colonel Campbell. Emma heard that the daughter of Campbell was married to a Mr. Dixon; the daughter was not quite good looking but Jane was a charming beauty. The old couple was called to Ireland, home of Mr. Dixon, after marriage but Jane did not go with them. Those incidents gave different meanings to Emma that Jane and Dixon had some kind of illicit relationship, and even she confided that with Frank Churchill who, later known that had secretly been engaged with Jane:

One would rather have a stranger preferred than one's very particular friend – a stranger it might not recur again – but the misery of having a very particular friend always at hand, to do every thing better than one does oneself! – Poor Mrs. Dixon! Well, I am glad she is gone to settle

in Ireland . . . But if she [Jane] continued to play whenever she was asked by Mr. Dixon, one may guess what one chuses. (196)

Emma thinks that Jane has a secret relation with Dixon whom Miss Campbell married; she concluded that Jane's singing paved the way for that. But later it is known that a false notion; she confided it with Frank who already had a secret engagement with Jane. It shows that how naïve was she at the beginning to draw any conclusions about the incidents.

Emma slowly and regularly got experience with her failures. Her celebration after she was successful of match making of Taylor and Weston made her think that she could make matches easily and perfectly. So, she tried for Harriet, her new friend a suitable match with Mr. Elton, the village vicar. She thought that despite the uncertain origin of Harriet, she is worthy of Mr. Elton and any other man like him. She was creating a place for Elton in Harriet's heart, in the meantime Robert Martin; a respectable farmer who worked at Mr. Knightley's approached Harriet with a marriage proposal. It seemed that Harriet has feelings for Martin; Emma forced Harriet to eject him:

'Miss Woodhouse, as you will not give me your opinions, I must do as well as I can by myself; and I have now quite determined, and really almost made up my mind – to refuse Mr. Martin. Do you think I am right?'

'Perfectly, perfectly right, my dearest Harriet; you are doing just what you ought. While you were at all in suspense I kept my feelings to myself, but now that you are so completely decided I have no hesitation in approving. Dear Harriet, I give myself joy of this. But it would have been the loss of a friend to mine; I could not have visited

Mrs. Robert Martin, of Abbey-Mill Farm. I am secure of you for ever.

(50)

Emma had emotionally threatened Harriet to refuse the proposal of Martin. She even said that if Harriet had married Martin, she never would remain friend to her but with her refusal she would remain her friend forever. In this way Emma's naivety and her thinking superior to other was troubling her much at the beginning. This wrong decision would pinch her later and there would a painful lesson for her.

She further incited Harriet to have feelings for Mr. Elton. She managed many meetings with him. She tried to make both of the near to each other. She somehow forced Harriet to think the only suitable person for her I this earth is Elton. Elton too accompanied the both girls, but most of the times Emma wanted to remain far letting Harriet and Elton be connected:

The idea of Mr. Walton was certainly cheering; but still after a time, she was tenderhearted again towards the rejected Mr. Martin. 'Now he has got my letter,' said she softly. 'I wonder what they are all doing – whether his sisters know – if he is unhappy, they will be unhappy too. I hope he will not mind very much.' 'Let us think of those among our absent friends who are more cheerfully employed,' cried Emma. 'At this moment, perhaps, Mr. Elton is sewing your picture to his mother and sisters, telling how much more beautiful is the original, and after being asked for it five or six times, allowing them to hear your name, your own dear name.' (53)

Though Harriet had still feelings for Martin, Emma tried to blur it by mentioning the name of Elton. She also had given him a portrait of Harriet without her knowledge to be framed by him in London. In all means Emma had tried them to come closer. The

place Harriet had for Martin, Emma tried to make for Elton, because he was suitable match for Harriet according to Emma.

The degree of nearness between Harriet and Elton was increasing in the eyes of Emma, and Harriet could only see through the eyes of Emma. But what Elton was really thinking was unknown to Emma but also she was guessing positively because Elton liked the company of Harriet who was always with Emma. In Chapter 13, the Woodhouses and Knightleys were invited to the Westons' for Christmas Eve dinner. Harriet and Mr. Elton were also included, but Harriet came down with a sore throat and was forced to miss the gathering. Emma met Mr. Elton while visiting Harriet and was pleased by his attentions to her friend, but she remained puzzled that he refused her suggestion to skip the party since Harriet would not be there. Up to then Emma was positive about Elton, but when the party was suddenly broken up because of the snowing, Emma had to ride in Elton's carriage. In this journey, Elton declared his love for her and proposed:

Oh! Miss Woodhouse! Who can think of Miss Smith, when Miss Woodhouse is near! No, upon my honor, there is no unsteadiness of character. I have thought only of you. I protest against having paid the smallest attention to any one else. Every thing that I have said or done, for many weeks past, has been with the sole view of marking my adoration of yourself. You cannot really, seriously, doubt it. No! I am sure you have seen and understand me . . . Charming Miss Woodhouse! Allow me to interpret this interesting silence. It confesses that you have long understood me. (127)

Hoping that he was merely drunk, Emma attempted to remind him that Harriet was the true object of his affections. Astonished, Elton assured Emma that he had never

been interested in Harriet. He had only loved for her and his intimacy with Harriet was only in the sense that she was a friend to Emma. This revelation made Emma think more and more about her matchmaking; she was also getting the knowledge about the ups and downs of life, exploring her self thoroughly.

It is clearly seen the bleak and gloomy male dominated society of early nineteenth century in the novel. The beautiful females are the attention of males and male gazes. All the time Emma was the center of affection of Elton; he had never paid any affection towards Harriet. Beautiful Emma would later also become the centers of attention because she was beautiful, and the males wanted to own her. But was strong enough to handle all those situations and decide about her life devoid of any such influences. He could decide about Harriet and Martins' relationship; she clearly rejected the proposal of Elton too. In this sense she is capable enough to enjoy her proper freedom in male dominated society too. The male gaze and the patriarchal norms and values of a society make a woman vulnerable, but Emma is powerful enough to whitewash all such dogmas.

Emma's failure in match making between Elton and Harriet made her so depressed that she decided to give up match making again, but she would find a match for Harriet. This incident was much fueled by Knightley too who had suggested Martin to propose Harriet. He too scolded Emma for being the main cause of refusal. By all those, Emma thought that all those she was doing was not a good thing:

It was a wretched business indeed! – Such an overthrow of every thing she had been wishing for! – Such a blow for Harriet! – that was the worst of all. Every part of it brought pain and humiliation, of some sort or other; but compared with the evil to Harriet, all was light; and she would gladly have submitted to feel yet more mistaken – more in error



– more disgraced by misjudgment, than she actually was, could the effects of her blunders have been confined to herself. (130)

Emma was feeling guilty of Harriet's heart being hurt. She was feeling more depressed for the whole job match making and settling other's life. For her it was nothing regrettable and melancholic but she was worried for the break up of heart of Harriet; it was only the encouragement of Emma that she forced her to have compassionate feeling for Elton.

The arrival of new character Frank Churchill makes Emma feel better despite her failure. She was delighted to be with Frank; he was also enjoying the company of her. Jane Fairfax, grand daughter of Mrs. Bates too arrived in Highbury, whom Emma did not like much. Those arrivals made everyone happy again; the arrival of Frank was long awaited in the village. He was son of Mr. Weston and late Mrs. Weston who had reared by his uncle and aunt in London. He was due to come there many times but could not come because of his sick and complaining aunt. All those new incidents made Emma forget about her failure of matchmaking. At the beginning Emma was flirted by Frank and she was happy about that; everyone in the village liked the match. Emma was also happy about that but later she decided that Frank would be a good match for Harriet.

The courtship of Knightley and Jane; the intimacy and caring of Knightley and Harriet made Emma confused time and again. The ball which Emma and Frank planned to organize at Highbury was due because of Frank's aunt who was sick. After the return of Frank, everything went on properly but in a pace. The newlywed Mr. and Mrs. Elton tried to be superior over other, Jane was coming near to Knightley more and Harriet was helped by different males. The ball was successful for Emma because Harriet was dancing with Knightley who had

decided not to dance while she was dejected by Elton to dance. This made Emma very happy that the match between them would be a perfect one. After the end of dance, Harriet was saved by Frank who chased the bothering gypsy and led her home safely. Harriet confided with Emma that she was in love with a person of a high rank, and it would be impossible to marry. She only admired the person his look and the pleasing feeling she got when thinking about him:

‘Oh! Miss Woodhouse, believe me I have not the presumption to suppose – Indeed I am not so mad. – But it is a pleasure to me to admire him at a distance – and to think of his infinite superiority to all the rest of the world, with the gratitude, wonder, and veneration, which are so proper, in me especially. . . The very recollection of it, and all that I feel at the time – when I saw him coming – his noble look – and my wretchedness before. Such a change! In one moment such a change! From perfect misery to perfect happiness! (332-333)

Emma thought that the person whom Harriet had such feeling was Frank who had just rescued from the attack of Gypsies. She was relieved to find Harriet finding a proper match, but as Harriet confided, the man is above her rank and she never hoped to marry him; just his glance would make him happy.

Such incidents were making Emma more matured and enlightened as a woman; she started to see and search other’s happiness. Even though Emma had resolved to use more discretion in promoting a match between Harriet and Frank than she used when encouraging Harriet’s affection for Mr. Elton, she manages to cause a misunderstanding precisely because she shied away from explicit statements. When Emma said of Harriet’s new object of affection, “The service he rendered you was enough to warm your heart (332)”, she was referring to Frank, who saved Harriet

from the Gypsies. Harriet, however, thought of Mr. Knightley, who saved her from humiliation by asking her to dance. This misunderstanding was cleared when it was known that Jane and Frank had secretly married afore they came to Highbury. The death of aunt of Frank revealed the truth and again the truth about the relationship of Knightley Harriet. Though Knightley had no particular compassion for Harriet, she misinterpreted his help as his compassion for her.

There was something disturbing about the nature of Emma's realization that she had treated Harriet badly. Using free association to relate Emma's thoughts, the narrator comments, "She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before. How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling, had been her conduct! (345)" Yet, following her mistake with Mr. Elton, Emma had already recognized the inappropriateness of meddling with Harriet's romantic life, and she had adjusted her behavior accordingly. Furthermore, Harriet now seemed to have achieved the success Emma wished for her—a match with Knightley would raise her position in the world immensely. It was clear that Emma believed she had done wrong not because she had injured Harriet, but because she had injured herself, and possibly Mr. Knightley by exposing him to an undignified match. However, Emma was happy to find the happy ending for Frank as well as for Harriet, but inwardly she also liked Knightley. She hid such feelings in the name of matchmaking and the pretention of not marrying her whole life. In a conversation with Knightley, she wanted him not to confide his love for Harriet and tried to silence him several times; she said that she would be happy to as a friend for him, thinking about the match between him and Harriet. To her surprised, Knightley declared his own love for her:

‘As a friend!’ – repeated Mr. Knightley. – Emma, that I fear is a word – No, I have no wish – Stay, yes, why should I hesitate? – I have gone too far already for concealment. – Emma, I accept your offer – tell me, then, have I no chance of ever succeeding? My dearest Emma, for dearest you will always be, whatever the event of this hour’s conversation, my dearest, most beloved Emma . . . I cannot make speeches, Emma . . . If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am. – You hear nothing but truth from me. (416-417)

The confession of love of Knightley for Emma made her surprised, happy, astonished and worried at the same time. She was happy for having Knightley’s love, surprised to hear such a moment and worried about Harriet who had harbored the feelings of love for Knightley in front of her. She was totally shocked to hear such words from Knightley which she never had thought, but all the time she was sorry for Harriet who was rejected by Elton and now would be cheated by both Emma and Knightley.

Knightley and Emma decided that they would not let Harriet know about their relation, so they managed to send Harriet to London. They are now to prepare for the engagement; Jane and Frank had already been decided to marry, and Frank had apologized for his misbehavior for Emma which he did out of the need of the situation. He was in the pressure to hide his secret engagement with Jane so he took the help of flirtation with Emma. Everyone forgave Frank and welcomed the both would be couples in Highbury. Emma was still worried about Harriet whose heart would break when she would hear that Knightley was going to marry with Emma.

Mr. Knightley had news for Emma: Harriet was to marry Robert Martin. Knightley had sent Mr. Martin to London with a package for his brother while Harriet

was there, and Mr. Martin began to spend time with the family. Knightley worried that Emma was upset, but in fact she was thrilled, amazed, and amused at Harriet's rapid recovery. Emma was thankful that she had not done Harriet greater injury, and she was glad that soon she would no longer need to conceal Harriet's emotional state from Knightley. Harriet returned from London, and Emma was glad to see how completely she had recovered from her infatuation with Knightley. It was revealed that Harriet's father was a tradesman, a respectable person, but not the aristocrat that Emma had predicted. In this way the novel ends with the marriages of Martin and Harriet at first, then Emma and Knightley and Frank and Jane at last, happily solving who would marry whom.

In this way the happy ending of the novel pleases all; most importantly, Emma has got great lessons about life, she is more matured, optimistic and well aware of her efficiencies and weaknesses. In other words, she has explored her personality, her self and a true identity of a respectable and educated woman in a society. Emma tried to dismantle the stereotypes of women in a society through her actions and behaviours. She was able to control most of the males of but in an intellectual and social way. Elton, Martin, Frank, Knightley and even Weston – all spell bounded to the qualities of Emma. She makes each and every guess and matches of the society, and able to revolve the males around her unlike the classical novels where the vice versa appears.

Emma becomes a perfect and respected woman at the turn of the novel. Her failures in matchmaking, the corrections made by Knightley, the flirtation with Frank, the account of Harriet and the episodes with Elton and his wife let her know more and more about life and social life. She acknowledges her position at society; now she is not impatient to make matches and deserving the credits for that. For all these transformations, Emma, as a woman does stone grinding efforts to explore her self to

establish her identity. The narrator too acknowledges the changed and existential position of Emma:

The event, however, was most joyful; and every day was giving her fresh reason for thinking . . . She would be placed in the midst of those who loved her, and had better sense than herself; retired enough for safety, and occupied enough cheerfulness. She would be never led into temptation, nor left for it to find her out. She would be respectable and happy. (468)

Emma got the utmost respect and love in the society because of her efforts, endurance and struggle. She had to struggle much to create her identity as a 'being' in a male dominated society. Her long journey towards perfection, identity and independence unveiled her identity in the society.

Jane Austen's *Emma* is a suitable portrayal of a character of a woman in the early nineteenth century British society which was a hallmark of male domination, yet Emma, the protagonist of the novel, is able to dismantle the masculinity demarcations for her exploration of self. She not only creates her identity in such society, but also disillusioned other females like Jane and Harriet who had internalized the patriarchal norms and values and the superiority of men. Unlike the modern and radical notion of feminism, Austen is able to create a world of equality where both sexes live equally. However, the society is male dominated, the women like Emma can make it equal and better for all, similarly the awareness of the equal position makes a society better. The whitewash of males and the familial systems like marriage that the modern feminism looks for, would not bring the equal and harmonious situation in the society. As Austen delineates in *Emma*, the victory of women to be equal in the society would be a real one and enjoyable only if there is the presence of the both sexes.

### **III. Conclusion: Emma: An Assertion of Female Self**

*Emma* successfully presents women's exploration of self and identity in the male dominated British society of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The main character of the novel, Emma is able to live independently and liberally among the males who are the product of patriarchal norms and values. On the other hand Jane Austen has presented a society which is patriarchal but Emma, the protagonist of the novel, struggles for equality, her identity and respectable position of women in the society which becomes successful. She is juxtaposed to the modern feminist characters who long and slogan for the reign of the women – a no men's land.

With many ups and downs, failures and success, Emma becomes successful, perfect and respected woman in the society. She has got many lessons; she has become matured within the society and created her own existence among males in the village of Highbury. Emma did not plan about her life and marriage whole her life; she was much worried about others; her great grief was for Harriet whose match she tried many times but failed. Ultimately, Harriet's marriage with Robert Martin gave her utmost satisfaction. She was getting what she had struggled for, though gradually.

Emma wanted to make matches for all – she started with Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston which was a successful one. She was naïve then and declared that she would find a match for Harriet soon. Her effort to make a pair of Elton and Harriet shattered which distressed her much. All the time, there was the optimum freedom and independence for Emma to enjoy. Perhaps, this was the reason that she wanted to make the lives of all females happy; she wanted to decide and determine what is good for them despite the pressure and influence of male.

The males of Highbury wanted to play with Emma, her liberty and emotions time and again. Elton, Knightley, Frank, are all the examples who wanted to possess her in different means. But Emma was bold and capable enough to handle all such situations easily. Elton surrendered at the beginning, and Frank could only use her to hide his secret. The greatness of Emma in this matter made him a loser and he was humbly pardoned by Emma. She was never become a puppet in the hands of males although she was grown up in the very society whose built up was patriarchal. She was equal in all her manner with men; it would not be a flattery if we say that she excelled with males in some ways.

Practically, females were denied education, social encounter, inheritance of property and even 'thinking'. They were confined inside the four walls of a house. It was a long established fact that had women been given equal opportunities like men, they would be on the same ground with males – may be this is the fact that they have been deprived of all such things! In this connection, Austen creates a woman who had been given all the facilities the women lacked, and she is similar in all aspects with males. It shows that if they had been given chance, they would not be less than men.

The stereotypical images of women created by men shows that how limited knowledge they have about females. They want the females under them in all aspects; the qualities the males lack are attributed to females. They are meek, emotional, weak and beautiful for males. They are the object of play and pleasure for males. Austen gives a suitable and perfect answer in *Emma* with the portrayal of Emma who is beyond the stereotypical images of women. She is perfectly a single woman having the quality that can be found only in many males. She is beautiful, bold, reasonable, independent, educated, outspoken and dominant. She deserves and maintains all these qualities with utmost clarity and perfection.



As a rule of thumb, in spite of all these afore mentioned qualities, Emma lacks experience; she is naïve and immature. The whole novel is Emma's journey from immaturity to maturity, inexperience to experience, and naivety to perfection. She, at the end of the novel, with many ups and downs, victories and failures, is able to be a matured and respected woman who has explored her self – her identity in a long run.

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