

I. INTRODUCTION

Pride and Prejudice (1813), the second novel of Jane Austen, elucidates women's realization of being treated as subordinate, inferior and subjugated to men and attempts to depict both men and women equal in terms of intelligence, power, and economy. But patriarchal convention and laws impenitently rule women imposing male ideologies upon them. Austen observes the precarious existence of women in male governed society and intends to empower them though she knows that she can not dismantle the hierarchy.

Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* focuses more on female characters rather than on the male ones. It indirectly infers her concerns to the problems of females. She claims that women are intellectual beings as well and their participation in different sectors of the society is inevitable as that of men's. Austen in her novel explores women's pathetic condition in the male-oriented society where women are looked down upon in every domain of human life.

Jane Austen as a writer of realistic fiction has attempted to present the exact picture of her society where women have largely been deprived of practicing fundamental rights and moreover made to get limited to the domestic affairs due to the hierarchical notion of the society. Sketching such conditions of women, Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* explores how women are discriminated and behaved with and what obstacles the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet faces in the biased society because of sexual differences.

The contemporary society seems to have been depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*. Austen was quite discontent with the society she lived in because it was biased to women. The patriarchal social structure inferiorized women and discarded them from power to

sensibility. They were motivated to be sentimental and emotional so that they could be pleasing to males. Austen through *Pride and Prejudice* hits her dissatisfaction against society that compelled women to restrict in powerless and pathetic existence.

Austen successfully depicts women's empowerment within the confinement of marriage institution. She asserts that marriage can provide women with economic security and social involvement. The women of Austen's time were deprived of economic rights. Austen sees women's welfare in marriage institution though women still have to live subordinate life to men even after being married. So most of women in *Pride and Prejudice* are feminine and carry out patriarchal conventions.

Austen deals with the domestic life of the village though her novels have universal significance. She has knowledge of a certain aspect of domestic life and she deals with that aspect in her novels. Austen's novels show us the inner lives of her characters, and depict the contemporary system of patriarchy. Being a moralist, Jane Austen believes in right and wrong and seeks for justice in the society. Austen is the writer of familial affairs as her novels explore the problems of a family in relation to patriarchal society of her age. Most of her novels represent everyday life of society and mingle satire and sentiment.

Jane Austen, in *Pride and Prejudice*, expresses the consciousness of people with regard to women. She attempts to awaken females regarding their genuine condition with her social experience in male governed society. Austen has faced biasness against women in western society but she knows the impossibility to reform the structure of the society. She believes that any effort to eliminate the concept of discrimination between men and women is likely to make a castle in the air. Austen seems to have been disappointed with

such a patriarchal society because it always deprives women of economic, social and political rights which is exposed in her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* and intends to secure a safe place for women.

The time of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century when Jane Austen wrote was patriarchal. Women did not have their own individual identity and they could realize their autonomous existence. The atmosphere of the society for women was unfavorable. The female writer had to struggle more than male writers to establish themselves. There was no organization that favored women. As a result, women could not develop the sense of unity nor could participate in the activities of the social world. The male governed society laughed at women and ridiculed their arts, so the female's works did not flourish in Austen's time. However, to make their works popular, some female writers disguised their names. When Austen appeared in the literary field, the Age of Reason was about to end and the Romanticism was emerging as a dominant literary movement. Miss Austen wrote in the Romantic era but her style and temperament seems to be classical.

Jane Austen was writing novels in the period of political turmoil. The whole Europe was plunged into the state of war, causing tremendous political as well as social changes. The instability of Europe led to the execution of French Monarch, Louis 14th in 1783. Thus the whole Europe during Austen's time was in turmoil that ultimately ended in the early nineteenth century with the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. It was the period of political unrest which caused poverty, unemployment, injustice in England. The very situation of England was reflected in art, music and literature.

The scenario of politics and society was changing tremendously in Austen's time but Austen was quite aloof from the political changes and the state of warfare. She did not give any space to violence and war in her works as she thought it was frightening and painful to the readers. Her fictions were quite different from the events of her time. She was preoccupied with the social norms, and values and the vision of eighteenth century. Her novels neither depict any urban cities nor the complicated life of the people. All the characters of her novel are brought together, either by marriage or by other social ties. Thus, her vision is limited on the unquestioning acceptance of the contemporary society. The novel neither talks about the French revolution nor the industrial revolution as it was. They were irrelevant to her.

Jane Austen, through her novels, has depicted the eighteenth century belief of a male governed society that ignored female's existence. In *Pride and Prejudice* Austen explores patriarchal values and depicts how females are made inferior by improper education and their evaluation in terms of social position and economy. The women like Elizabeth Bennet are bound to depend on the male figures like father, brother and husband. Elizabeth, in spite of her knowledge about biased nature of patriarchal tradition, marries Mr. Darcy for her life security. Austen intends to empower women in the marriage institutions where women are not autonomous.

Pride and Prejudice has been the subject of volumes of diverse critical reactions since its publication. Evaluations of this work are of various natures. Many early critics focused on the social realism of the novel, commenting on the depth, or lack of depth, of Austen's characters. Criticism of the novel from the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century also tended to regard Austen as moralist, discussing the value system

that *Pride and Prejudice* establishes. Critics from the 1920s through the 1950s focused on Austen's characteristic themes and stylistic devices, as well as discussing her choice of subject matter and the moral and ideological journey that Elizabeth undertakes throughout the course of the novel. During the 1960s and 1970s, commentators offered contextual criticism that evaluated *Pride and Prejudice* within the literary and social world in which Austen wrote. It was also during this period that new direction in criticism of the novel began to be expanded. Since the late 1960s, for example, critics have approached Austen's novel from a variety of linguistic standpoints, such as Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, as well as analyzing the work in term of postmodern theory and applying new development in psychology to the text. There has also been increased attention given to the political subtext of novel, suggesting new ways of interpreting its relationship to the historical context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the later decades of the twentieth century and into the early years of the twenty-first century, the most prominent trends in criticisms of *Pride and Prejudice* have derived from the perspectives of literary feminism, including analysis of the novel's view of female oppression, its portrayal of the patriarchal society of the time, and its treatment of the possibility, fantasy, and reality of female power.

Critics like Sir Walter Scott, who praises Austen's art as "corn fields and collages and meadows," and says that her novels are instructive to "youthful wonderers who may return from their promenade to the ordinary business of life" (Gilbert and Guber, *The Madwomen in the Attic* 108). He appreciates her novels stating that they were witty with a variety of characters and presented a remarkable originality of the middle class society.

Sir Walter Scott consents on the truth that Austen incorporated the contemporary reality of the society in *Pride and Prejudice*. Referring the very truth Scott writes in a journal issued on 14th March, 1826 as:

Also read again and for the third time at least Miss Austen's very finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with [...] which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me. (135)

Hence it gets clear that Austen never went out of her social circle. Whatever she perceived sensationally, she made them the subject of her novels. And this is the main reason why her novels are all the more natural. *Pride and Prejudice* too sketches out the real life of people of middle class who live and spend their life in their own way.

Margaret Oliphant is one of the female critics stated in 1870: "Austen is not the judge of the men and women she collects round her" (194-5). Austen's skill was just to pick up what was in environment. Austen's habit was the result of a feminine mind which helped her to identify human psychology. Oliphant's study of Austen has proved that the feminine feeling is sufficiently powerful in itself to motivate women to develop broad views.

Later, critics started to centralize their criticisms to her texts. For example, George Pellow appreciates: "Austen as the wittiest and the brightest women" (176). He admires Austen's simple description of the common familiar environment and finds her

novel entertaining. He adds that Austen possesses one rare faculty: scientific precision in literature and art.

Madeleine Hope Dodds evaluates Austen's heroines with a new perspective.

According to Dodds, Austen's heroines are courageous and independent in their thought.

Thus Dodds comments:

It is a plea for independence of thought[...] It is one of the curious anomalies of criticism that Miss Austen's heroines are censured nowadays for being prim and colourless, while in her own time they were regarded as dangerously willful and head strong, setting a bad example to other young women. Of the two, the earlier opinion is the more correct. Under their demure air, they all hide strong characters and independent mind.

(88)

Austen's heroines are the products of her dreams. They are symbols of women's valiance. The females in *Pride and Prejudice* always seem busy. They are both feminine and feminist. They are laborious, and have taken life as a challenge. They do their best to spend life in a pleasant way. They want to live as social beings in the revolutionary period.

Like Austen's, Virginia Woolf's feminist feelings are too expressed directly in literature. Indicating Austen's success, she says that Austen achieved it only due to her keen observation and feminine feeling. Woolf praises Austen and her works and says: "Jane is thus a mistress of much emotion than appears upon the surface she stimulates us to supply what is not there" (O'Neil, *Critics on Jane Austen* 26).

Rebecca West, the publisher and bookseller finds a consciousness in Austen, which expresses itself even in the chaotic environment of the Napoleonic wars. West in 1932 praises Austen's feminist feelings and audacious thought in the topic: "The Feminism of Jane Austen in *Jane Austen: the Critical Heritage* (1987) which shows Austen's attitudes contrary to her age" (294).

Modern critics have distinct concepts regarding Jane Austen. Their techniques to criticism are scientific and their perspectives are inventive. Therefore, Austen's novels are better received than they were in the Victorian period. Today, Austen is honored as a fine painter of life. D. W. Harding admires Austen in 1940 for fulfilling the duty of a citizen that is of the presentation of the comic foible and amiable weaknesses of people which shock the society. Harding regards Austen's novels 'interesting and innocuous caricature of life' (42).

Most of the modern critics of Austen stress on her morality. Among them, Malcolm Bradbury in 1962 expresses his ideas: "Austen is concerned with two kinds of world- the social world and the moral world' and she does not simply mirror a society but subtly composes it into existence" (173). Austen's society contains folly and deceits which her *Pride and Prejudice* represents. In the novel, each person is prominent and has regards for self and others.

Brain C. Southam is one of the keen readers of Austen's novels. According to her, Austen's novels reflect a mental duality: one is her internal humanity as womanhood and other is the social being as femininity. As Southam says, Austen is a heroine of the feminist and a champion of domestic values. So, Austen is recognized as one of the supreme novelists. Southam contemplates on Austen's skill to observe the human culture

and the women's status in a very patriarchal society. Southam, giving more emphasis on Austen, says in 1987: "Jane Austen was welcomed by Victorian feminists as a fellow spirit of course; Austen is a feminist spirit for ever in literary field" (11).

In the early 1970s, Austen's interest in the 'woman problem' is firmly identified by several commentators. In 1973, Lloyd Brown in *Jane Austen and in the Feminist Tradition* (1973) recognizes her as a 'feminist writer' and claims that her themes are comparable to Wollstonecraft. In 1978, Susan MacDonald describes the subject of *Pride and Prejudice* as: "the interplay between the individual female character and the conventional social roles into which society tends to force its woman" (36).

In this way, Jane Austen is simply considered a pioneer of feminist movement. As a moral social artist, her attempt is just to picture the society as it is where she depicts genuine problems of women and seeks resolution. However, her morality and consciousness lead her to capture humanity broadly in her arts. Austen shows women's intellect as that of men and intends to empower them but she, finally, concludes that women can feel secured in the patriarchal convention. *Pride and prejudice* should be considered as Austen's attempt to empower women and uplift their status but severe patriarchal values restrict women into domestic periphery which Austen does not dare to dismantle.

The following chapters discuss feminism as a theoretical tool and analyze the novel *Pride and Prejudice* from the perspective of feminist criticism respectively. The research focuses on how Austen has attempted to empower women and how patriarchy is an obstacle in women's empowerment.

II. Feminism

Feminism is a political movement that emerged in the late 1960s with the aim to enhance their social, economic and political status both in theory and practice. The main objective of feminist movement is to bring women's potentialities into light and make them aware of their own existence in the patriarchal society. Females were endowed with little opportunity to forward their ideas. Now, they try to dismantle the prevalent patriarchal hierarchy in which they are inferiorized with the male ideology. Feminism attempts to define women as autonomous human beings. Arvonne S. Fraser sheds light on feminism: "The object of feminism was to elevate the equal lights and human right, status of women of race language, or religion in all fields of human enterprise and to eliminate all discrimination against women" (44). It, therefore, studies women's bitter reality of oppression and rejection of the freedom of personal expression. Now, at present, the feminist movement seeks to alter patriarchal stereotypes of woman as relatively weak, passive, docile and dependent individuals who are considered less rational and more emotional than men. Feminists advocate for greater freedom for women like men in every field.

The patriarchal society is basically based on hierarchy between male and female where women are excluded to marginality from the existing social structure in terms of gender and sex. The one is privileged and the other endures sorrows and sufferings because of their confinement in patriarchal ideologies. This sort of inequality is actually a byproduct of social values and the common consent of human beings which has created a gulf in people and determines their places in terms of sex in the society. The men hold centre in patriarchal culture and celebrate their full-fledged freedom whereas women are

subjugated to the periphery as inferior to men. The male-oriented social norms and values determine female's place in the social structure for its own sake. Now, it has got political shape because one appears as ruler and other as ruled. Since the human history began, this notion of patriarchy has determined almost entire feature and nature of the society, its values and priorities, the place and image of women within it, and the relation between sexes. Such sort of principles and practices binds the women to the marginality. They consent with patriarchy, being suffered in prior days but when they began to realize their 'self' and 'identity' as women, they stepped against patriarchal norms and values. Now they fight to gain back their lost rights and values such as freedom, language, and identity and so on. Such women's quest for liberation and fight against inequality for equality and identity leads to feminist awareness.

Feminism as a theoretical discourse advocates the rights of women and their political, social and economic equality with men. It is a principle redefining women's activities and goals from its own perspective and refusing to assent on the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to sex object, a second sex, a submissive other. It aims to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices that women suffer from because of sex discrimination.

So, feminism is a massive complaint against patriarchy. Freeman: "Feminism is a term that emerged long after women started questioning their inferior status and demanding amelioration in their social position" (3). As it is concerned with women's right and emancipation, it is a political theory and practice to untie all the social bondages of patriarchy. Defining feminist criticism, Toril Moi writes: "It is a specific kind of

political discourse; a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature” (204).

Feminism became a dominant force in the 1960s and changed the face of time as women realized their inferior and subjugated position in the patriarchal society and began to fight against this inequality. It has had its origin two centuries earlier with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Right of Women* (1792); which is thought to be the first formal enhancement of feminist writing though many others had tried their hands before her but they failed.

Wollstonecraft advocates educational and social equality for women and argues that society can never retain women only in the role of convenient domestic ‘slaves’ and alluring mistress by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else. She speaks with uncommon force and vigor about the institutionalized, culturally sponsored oppression of women. Criticizing the patriarchal educational system, Mary Wollstonecraft states:

To do everything orderly manner is a most important precept which women, who, generally speaking, receive only a disorderly kind of education, seldom attend to with that degree of exactness that men, who from their infancy are broken into method observe –This negligent kind of guesswork-[...] prevents their generalizing matters of facts; so they do today what they did yesterday merely because they did it yesterday. (94)

Mary Wollstonecraft, a British political thinker emphasizes on awareness of women which could only be possible when they are nurtured with proper rational learning and education and brought into the mainstream of multi-dimensional development of society.

She generalizes that the equality of gender should be based on capacity, skill and intelligence.

The feminist's powerful and revolutionary argument for the establishment of legal, political and social equality between men and women, implanted by Wollstonecraft couldn't accelerate so speedily for more than one century. *Women in the 19th Century* (1845) by Margaret Fuller and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill were only the two major books on feminism in the whole nineteenth century.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) greatly contributed for the worldwide emergence of feminism in the first half of the twentieth century. Woolf explores the situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural, economic and educational incapability within the patriarchal society which restricts them from realizing their creative possibilities. Indisputably, the central image of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) has contributed to the understanding that gender equality has more to do with economic power than with biology though the feminist trend of her time was concerned for absolute 'equality' and the erasure of 'difference' between the sexes. So, Woolf has voiced for radical change as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that have been shaped by men. Woolf has also prioritized fiction in her book *A Room of One's Own* and has stated: "Fiction must stick to facts and the truer the facts the better the fiction" (15).

To succeed in any field, Woolf accepts genius and constant effort. In relation to genius, she says: "Luck up your libraries if you like, but there is no gate, no lock, and no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (70). Woolf praises Jane Austen and

Emily Bronte as forerunners for their great ability to write even in strong masculine period.

Virginia Woolf is quite unsatisfied with precarious situation for the women in which women were not free to write and therefore Woolf questions the very situation.

She says:

The most superficial enquiry into women's writing raises a host of question. Why, we ask at once, was there no continuous writing done by women before the eighteenth century? Why did they then write almost as habitually as men, and in the course of that writing produce, one after another, some of the classics of English fiction? And why did their art then, and why to some extent does their art still, take the form of fiction?

(33)

Feminist content was the basis for the censorship of publication. Women's need and interests were ignored. In patriarchal society, the law, constitution and the executive body were biased against women.

Feminism begins especially with Simone de Beauvoire, Kate Millett and Batty Friedan along with the contribution of outstanding female authors. They examine the female's self as interpreted by male authors and see their texts as model of power. Beauvoir insists "the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or 'other' to men as the defining and dominating 'subject' who is assumed to present humanity in general"(Abrams 234). She claims that women have been taken as secondary to men. Men define human, not appropriately women. It is civilization as a whole that produces the creature which is described as feminine. She contradicts the patriarchal

myth of women presuming the female essence prior to individual existence in the work of many male writers.

De Beauvoir demonstrates how the myth of women plays a significant role in the literature of male writers. Regarding the same context Rosemarie Tong declares what De Beauvoir said in *The Second Sex*:

In a chapter summarizing the writing of five male authors about women, de Beauvoir demonstrated the way in which each of these authors depending on his own specific self-image, and constructed for himself ideal women. [...]; Breton cherishes Melusine, rooted in nature, pinning his note on the women-child; Stendhal wants his mistress intelligent, cultivated, free in spirit and behavior; an equal. (205)

What is common to these distinctively different ideals of women is that in each case the ideal women are urged to forget, deny, or in some way negate themselves. The history is itself largely responsible for the plight of women because history is written in wide influence of patriarchal power.

The biological opposition between male and female has nicely been understood by many of the feminist critics. All biological variations are natural. Males are considered significant and weighted because of patriarchal anatomy, whereas the females have been imposed on a series of negative values so as to continue the male's domination upon them. Cixous notes that each opposition is hierarchy and is biased to women.

Fundamentally, feminist theory analyzes the gender-relation of the society where patriarchal ideologies are largely prevalent. The study of gender-relation includes feminist issues as well. The feminists' pride lies in their femaleness and they have made

it a vital tool to secure their existence. Evaluating the discrimination and domination upon women by patriarchal culture and society, Toril Moi writes, “Feminist criticism, then, is a specific kind of old political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism not simply concern for gender in literature”(204).

The radical feminists insist that the root of women’s oppression and violence deep-rooted in patriarchy is sex\gender hierarchy. Cate Millett in her “*Sexual Politics*” (1970) has clarified that sex is politically motivated because the male-female relationship is determined by it. Defining ‘politics’ as the operation of power relation in society, Millett argues that western institutions have manipulated power to establish the domination and subordination along with subjugation of women in society. She further attacks on Freudian psychoanalytical theory for its male biasness and analyzes the fiction of D.H.Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet opining how they upgrade their aggressive ‘phallic’ selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects in their works.

The patriarchal society considers women’s existence in relation to man, therefore men occupy the position of subject and absolute whereas women are regarded an incidental and inessential being .Rosemarie Tong quotes Mill’s “*Sexual Politics*” in *Feminist Thought* regarding the male superiority in patriarchal society as:

Patriarchal ideology, according to Millett, exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or “masculine”, roles and that woman always has the subordinate, or “feminine”, ones. This ideology is particularly powerful

because through conditioning, men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that most women internalize the sense of inferiority to men. (96)

So, feminism as a political movement has harshly begun questioning the longstanding dominant, male phallo-centric ideologies in order to establish common ground on which both male and female are measured in terms of virtue not in terms of biological variations.

Elaine Showalter has entitled women's writing and women's culture in which she claims that women have their own sort of culture and language. They have their own types of body, the speaking style, the language, the capacity of thinking and behaving, the psyche and the males have their own. Showalter's *A Literature of their Own: British Woman Novelist from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) describes the female literary tradition in the English novels from Bronte and onward as a development of a subculture by arguing that since women, in general, constitute a kind of subculture within the framework of a larger society, their works definitely demonstrate a unity of values, conventions, experiences and behaviors encroaching on each individual. Showalter in her analysis of historical development of feminism presents three important stages of a female literary tradition: feminine, feminist and female. The collaboration of the two contemporary feminists, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, is important both for understanding present world of feminism and its historical roots. They began an extensive study of women writers and set up a feminist literary tradition. Their influential work, *The Mad*

Women in the Attic (1974), explores pressure of psychology under which females are writing. It describes several key developments in the history of women's writing.

Through close biographical and textual reading of the works of female novelists-ranging from Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, and Mary Shelley to George Eliot and Emily Dickinson-this work traces the evaluation of a distinctly feminine narrative style that has come as a reaction to male dominated literary discourse prevailed in the time when these authors wrote.

Gubar and Gilbert have argued that women writers grew both afraid of that they lacked the ability to express themselves artistically and angry that the patriarchal attitudes toward women trapped them in such a position. Briefly, *The Mad Women in the Attic(1974)* demonstrates that by channeling those emotions and experiences into language, the nineteenth century women writers have developed not only a uniquely feminine style, but also a language that subverts patriarchal ideology. According to M.H.Abrams, Gilbert and Gubar declare:

Purpose that the 'anxiety of authorship that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is a exclusively male prerogative, effective in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine[...]; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage.(236)

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creativity of the nineteenth century tradition was perceived basically as a male quality that is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. The verity of theoretical emergences have presently influenced feminism that brought broad concept

about it which covers a wide scope and includes different aspects of humanity despite its focus on the entire issue of women. It, now, no more remains a unitary theory. It manifests great variety of critical vantage points and procedure, including adaptations of psychoanalytic, Marxist and diverse post-structuralist theories.

Julia Kristeva's *From the One Identity to Another* (1975) and Helen Cixous's *The Laugh of Medusa* (1980) are two prominent essays on psychoanalytic and deconstructive feminism, and both of which emphasize on women's discourse with female morphology speaking specific experiences. For Kristeva, female discourse that breaks with tradition is a political act of dissidence, a form of feminist action, and for Cixous, women's writing has a genuinely revolutionary force. As she argues: "When the repressed of the culture and their society return, it is an explosive, utterly deconstructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed"(Showalter 9).

In spite of variations, the various modes of feminism, however share certain assumptions and concepts that underline the diverse ways that individual critics explore the factor of sexual difference and privilege in the production, the form and content, the reception, and the critical analysis and evaluation of work of literature.

It is male hegemony that makes women consent on their inferiority in front of male. Women in the society consciously or unconsciously consent on their subordination before male. They are encouraged to choose their inferior status and accept male exploitation as natural. History is entirely male centered and women are completely absent in it. The concept of women in history is presented inappropriately because it is guided by patriarchal power. The patriarchy pervades the works of art which have been granted as great literature written almost by man for man. Annette Kolodny argues that

feminism appears: “More like a set of interchangeable strategies than any coherent school or shared goal orientation” (159). Elaine Showalter also agrees with Kolodny’s ideas saying, “Until very recently feminist criticism has not had a theoretical storm” (244).

On the other hand all feminist critics in some sense are revisionist, questioning the adequacy of accepted conceptual structure. Sandra Gilbert claims: “It wants to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connection between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychosexual identity and cultural, and authority” (36). Virginia Woolf speaks for women that a woman can not fulfill her literary ambition in the lack of social and economic support. She discloses the reality in her essay *A Room of One’s Own*: “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (4). Realizing that such feminist obsession with correcting, modifying, supplementing, reserving, humanizing, or even attacking male critical theory keeps itself dependent upon it and delays its progress in solving its own theoretical problems, many contemporary feminist critics appeal for the unity and shared goal, and for its own subject, its own system, its own theory, and its own voice. They argued that the feminist must choose the argument on their own premises.

There is the male hegemony in terms of many things such as marriage, labor division, and economic independence. As a matter of fact marriage is a bond of heart between a man and woman, which is based on the companionship replete with mutual respect, compassion and involvement. In the west, marriage has been a side part of women’s life where they try to maintain individual respect; moreover some marry as a resistance to their freedom. Some women regard marriage as a loss of autonomy, freedom and happiness simply because the males are perfunctory and exploitative in sexual

relationships. They think that marriage is a boredom and imprisonment within the routine household activities. They have to abandon their will and dreams for the completion of others' will and dreams. For them, marriage is a continuum of sacrifices, which creates a pseudo-existence under the name of their husbands. Beauvoir says: "The tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure woman the promised happiness- there is no such thing as assurance in regard to happiness- but that it mutilates her; it dooms her to repetition and routine" (534). In short the women feel controlled within the marriage bond due to the dominating behavior of the men.

Similarly women are marginalized in the affair of labor division as well since men dominate the society. Society needs an organization and management for the long-lasting and peaceful world; the division of labor betters social development. Many western women question and renounce the social construction of labor division based on biology. They are suspicious of the biased patriarchal society and its persuasion that women are weaker than men and hence suitable for household activities. They comment on the persuasion by saying that it is a way to reduce women into mere objects- moving but lifeless. They object the unpaid labor done by women at home, which goes unnoticed and undervalued. In the labor market of household activities, women are "neglected producers, but benefit goes to men; women become dependent beings on men" (Freedman 52). So women view that the weak and helpless condition of women should be put forward, and their household activities should be valued.

The economic self-dependence becomes an assuring factor for their self-respect in marital life. It values the self-duty and self-responsibility. Attallah brings the remark of Fiances Lear: "If a woman has no means to earn a living, she is dependent upon a man.

When she is dependent upon a man, she is not free. She does not trust him as well, because if you are dependent, you cannot trust. There can not be a healthy relationship if you are dependent upon somebody else for survival” (500). After all women want to be economically independent to realize their existence and happiness, and the self-dependent life is more successful and happier since they can stop being victims of male hegemony in terms of economic dependence.

The above discussed feminist discourse helps us to form arguments and justify Jane Austen’s attempts to empower women in her novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and to show how patriarchy subjugates the women of the time through the impact of patriarchal ideologies in English society. The discourse has conferred us a perspective to observe and analyze the novel in a meticulous and a scrupulous manner. It has enabled us to grasp the psyche, the intellect, the sentiment and the feeling of female and their urge to bring a revolutionary change in the society so that women can live independently with their supreme existence and individual identity.

III. Patriarchy as Obstacle in Empowering Women

In *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen orients to the slightly revolutionary approach. Her characters having central positions reflect the genuine intellectual and sensual qualities of the author. Since Austen seems to have evoked her perceptual and cognitive vision in *Pride and Prejudice*. Her central character, Elizabeth Bennet bears the intellectual and feministic costume of the author herself. Elizabeth, the mouthpiece of Austen appears as an active and versatile observer of the precarious existence of women in male-governed society, representing herself as a part of it. She exemplifies women who confront hardship and impediments in struggle, generated by social norms and values while they aim reasonably to proceed in quest of their identity, existence and security in patriarchy. *Pride and Prejudice* evokes women's experience of being treated as subordinate, inferior and subjugated to men and depicts both men and women to show that they are equal in term of intelligence, power and economy but patriarchal conventions and laws impenitently rule them by imposing male ideologies upon them.

Pride and Prejudice examines the unconscious and miserable existence of women as well as improper education, physical and mental torture upon women and their absence in economic domain through depiction of Bennet girls, especially Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist of the novel. Though the novel exposes Elizabeth's conscious and revolutionary stance from the patriarchal system imposed upon women by male dominated society which considers women as the second sex, she ultimately succumbs to cultural ideologies especially entanglement of male and female in a legal and social institution recognized as marriage.

Austen discloses women's precarious existence in the male governed society of her time. The female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* like Miss Elizabeth Bannet, Miss Jane Bannet, Miss Lydia Bannet, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh etc are centralized to reflect the male ideologies imposed on them in the patriarchal society. Elizabeth is a romantic heroine as it is mentioned: "It was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes" (16). On this ground Elizabeth represents conventional femininity. As Elizabeth being represented as female protagonist, Austen, here, makes the point that the social and literary conventions collaborate with biology to construct femininity.

Other female characters along with Elizabeth have been marginalized and made inferior and subjugated to male. Mrs. Bannet, a mother of five daughters lives a miserable and dependent life. She is compelled to accept the male culture and values without questioning them. Instead of being provided proper education and equal right as male figures are, she is trained for rearing her children. Moreover, she seems interested in the conventional marriage system. In addition to all these things, she is passionate instead of being critical and wants her daughters to have wonderful life style. Hence it gets pretty clear through her actual statement given in the text:

'What an excellent father you have, girls,' said she, when the door was shut. 'I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me either, for that matter. At our time of life, it not so pleasant I can tell you, to be making new acquaintance every day; but for your sake, we would do anything. Lydia, my love, though you *are* the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball.'(5)

Austen, here, apparently points out that the women in her age internalize submissive and docile features admitting the male ideologies. It has become pretty clear that the women like Mrs. Bannet consent on ideologies constructed in the male dominated society because they believe that their fortune depends on their husbands' success and satisfaction like of Mr. Bannet's.

Miss. Bingley, Mr. Bingley's sister is another prominent female figure in *Pride and Prejudice*, who represents the women of the superficial and hypocritical upper class. She comes to live with her brother and accompanies Jane Bannet to avoid her loneliness. In the meantime she tries to stop Jane Bannet from getting engaged with Mr. Bingley. But she herself pursues the rich person Mr. Darcy and turns livid with jealousy watching his growing attachment to Elizabeth. In fact Miss Bingley is a female victim in the patriarchal society. Instead of arguing against inequality between male and female, she gets tempted to the fashion and male preferred music. This suggests that she willingly internalizes the social structure based on the male ideologies and energizes Elizabeth to fall a prey to patriarchy through constant argumentation. Thus Miss. Bingley asserts her inner vision:

‘No one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A women must have thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserve.’(29)

Due to being influenced from patriarchal norms and values, she unknowingly becomes a victim of them. Consequently she can not distinguish between right and wrong and worthy and worthless. So Miss. Bingley wants women to possess charm, ability of being fashionable, skill of drawing and dancing, and capacity of playing music that can attract and amuse men, which indicate the imposition of male ideologies upon women only to make them inferior and subordinate to the male.

Miss Charlotte Lucas, another female figure in *Pride and Prejudice*, is a close friend and the best neighbor of Miss Elizabeth Bennet who becomes Mrs. Collins after getting married with Mr. Collins. Hence she loses her original identity that her name sinks in her husband's. This is in fact the convention of the patriarchic society. She happily accepts the role of a conventional wife and lives under the supervision of her husband. She spends the life of a subordinate and submissive woman. Her behavior and gesture apparently specifies that she feels inferior to men, which is obviously asserted in the given extract: "His pride," said Miss Lucas, "does not offend *me* so much as pride often does, because there an excuse for it. One can not wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favour, should think highly of himself. If may so express it, he has a *right* to be proud" (13).

Austen here demonstrates how the women of her time consent to their inferior position. Miss Charlotte Lucas thinks of men to have right to be proud if they have good fortune like Mr. Darcy but women like her have to depend on males for their economic security. Miss Jane Bennet, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, falls in love with a rich bachelor, Mr. Bingley. She seems to be simpleton. Being under the influence of male ideologies, she seeks for place in the marriage institution. Thus she proves her as a

conventional woman who usually consents on male values. Though she happily gets married to Mr. Bingley, she has to live the life under the supervision of the male figure where she loses her selfhood. Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Miss Georgiana Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* represent the conventional females. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, the mother of Miss Ann de Bourgh engages her to cultivate her daughter through traditional education that suits and benefits the males. She believes that the girls should be brought up under good guidance and strict supervision so that their lives can be secured. Her action and thought display that women are dependent and the means of pleasure. Such belief of the mother is pretty clear in her instruction that she gives to Miss Elizabeth Bannet for her journey via London to Longbourn:

‘Mrs. Collins, you must send a servant with them. You know I always speak my mind, and I can not bear the idea of two young women travelling post by themselves. It is highly improper. You must contrive to send somebody. I have the greatest dislike in the world to that sort of thing. –Young women should always be properly guarded and attended, according to their situation in life. When my niece Georgiana went to Ramstage last summer, I made a point of her having two men servants go with her. - Miss Darcy, the daughter of Mr. Darcy, of Pemberley, and Lady Anne, could not have appeared with propriety in a different manner. – I am excessively attentive to all those things. You must send John with the young ladies, Mr. Collins. I am glad it occurred to me to mention it; for it would really be discreditable to *you* to let them go alone.’ (162)

Stating truly, Austen asserts that the women of her age hardly admit the position of being independent due to the impact of patriarchal hegemony on their psyche. Therefore, the women like Lady Catherine de Bourgh expect the security and shelter provided by males.

Miss Georgiana Darcy is depicted as a passive and shy woman who does not seek autonomy. She is actually victimized in hands of the male. She wants her brother, Mr. Darcy to take care of her. She has to act as Mr. Darcy instructs her. Women like her are often victimized sometimes in the hands of fathers and sometimes in the hands of their brothers and husbands. Therefore, Jane Austen through *Pride and Prejudice* depicts the pathetic and miserable lives of women and attempts to empower them by awakening women about male dominated culture and values. She envisions that the cultural boundaries are to entrap women so that male figures can rule them and mobilize them as they wish.

Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* focuses more on female characters rather than on the male ones which indirectly infers that she is herself a feminist who advocates for the problems of females. By presenting, Elizabeth Bannet, the protagonist Austen challenges the patriarchal ideology that has always overpowered women since the initiation of human civilization. Here she attempts to promote females so that women could enjoy the height of independence. Along with this she highlights male's attitudes of patronizing women. Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy has got such attitudes. As a matter of fact he is fond of the physical beauty of women and considers them as the source of entertainment and pleasure. He hardly appreciates women's internal qualities. His innermost concept is thus exposed in the following extract: "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt

me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (7). He feels to be superior to the women.

Mr. Bannet’s patriarchal attitudes appear in the way of treating with his wife, Mrs. Bannet. He considers his wife to have been insensitive and stupid. Therefore, he shows indifference to his wife’s advice. He has got dominating nature and due to that he can neither understand his wife nor can his wife have been able to recognize his actual inner conscience throughout their marital life. The very fact is clear in the given excerpt:

Mr. Bannet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (3)

Here, Austen elucidates how men of her time had dominating and unfair attitudes towards women. So, women were considered incomprehensible, little informed with uncertain temper to impose inferior status upon them.

Mr. Collins is another male figure in *Pride and Prejudice* behind whom, Bannet’s property is entailed. He is, like other male characters that impose patriarchal ideologies on women. He thinks that women need constant guidance of males while making serious decisions which he, here, clearly explains: “Pardon me for neglecting to profit by your advice, which on every other subject shall be my constant guide, though in the case

before us I consider myself more fitted by education and habitual study to decide on what is right than a young lady like yourself” (74).

He considers him superior to Elizabeth Bannet as he opines that he is educated and habituated in making decisions because of being more rational than women.

Mr. Wickham, a villainous male figure who has eloped with Lydia Bannet, is not because of his true love for her but for the economic gain. He exercises his manly power to deceive women like Lydia emotionally. He wants women to be ruled and guided by men which is pretty clear in Elizabeth’s expression, “My youngest sister has left all her friends – has eloped; - has thrown into the power of – of Mr. Wickham”(209). Wickham deceitfully treats Lydia and does not agree to marry her unless his conditions are fulfilled. This shows that he handles Lydia selfishly to fulfill his own interest. He has no respect for women’s ‘self.’

By sketching the motif of male characters, Austen warns women against the male domination. She wants to encourage women to take serious actions against the male dominated society with an aim of getting independent human beings by heightening their position to the level of men.

The most of the influential characters in *Pride and Prejudice* (1811) are women. Their relation among themselves is emotionally intense. Elizabeth Bannet is the most significant character among them. She is comparatively a unique female character who represents the rational women. She is self-mobilized and independent in the decision making. She is more sensible and bolder than other female characters sensible. Despite this, she is humiliated and dominated in the male dominated society.

Elizabeth the mouthpiece of the writer has got many traits that prove her as an intellectual figure. Her liveliness of temper, her wit, her mature thinking, the ripeness of her judgment, her attachment to her family and especially to her elder sister Jane, her self-confidence and boldness, her realization of her mistakes and her feeling of repentance about them stand Elizabeth as intellectual being who represents Austen herself. Along with all these she does not indulge in frivolous talk. She strongly disapproves of the kind of talk in which her two youngest sisters often indulge. Furthermore she shows maturity of her mind when she urges her father not to allow Lydia to go to Brighton with Mrs. Forster. She tries to impress upon her father the unpleasant consequences which are likely to result from Lydia's stay in Brighton where she would be absolutely free to behave just as she likes. Elizabeth's these bold suggestions justify the fact that she exactly represents Austen's intellectuality.

Austen, by presenting Elizabeth Bannet as a revolutionary woman against the patriarchal society, justifies that the women are equal to men at the level of intellectuality as well. Therefore, she wants them to participate in the social affair which will empower them and bestow them opportunities of having equal rights in all aspects of human dealing. Austen chooses the female protagonist in, *Pride and Prejudice* to upgrade the women's status in the patriarchal scenario.

Austen, in *Pride and Prejudice* explores how women are discriminated and what obstacles the protagonist, Miss Elizabeth Bannet faces in the male dominated society because of gender discrimination.

The women are often considered as the second category of citizens. Therefore, they are ever deprived of all major social, political and economic affairs of society. They are sexually discriminated. Their intellectual capability and moral manners are often defined in terms of sex. Indeed this sort of discrimination is fully responsible to their misery and suffering. The most pathetic situation of women is that they are deprived of the economic right. Women were deprived of inheritance in the time of Austen and the same case is with Bannet girls which are obviously clear in Lady Catherine's talk with Miss Elizabeth Bannet, "Your father's estate is entailed on Mr. Collins, I think. For your sake", turning to Charlotte, "I am glad of it; but otherwise I see no occasion for entailing estates from female line" (126). Bannet estate is entailed on Mr. Collins, a cousin of Mr. Bannet because Bannet family has no male claim. Though Mr. Bannet has five daughters, they can not inherit their ancestral property because the patriarchal laws do not favor them. This sort of discrimination indicates the fact how women of the time faced economic crises due to such discriminating social policies. Whenever women are cut off from economic resources, they get bound to depend on the male figures. Males in fact exploit women in terms of economic matter. This kind of social discrimination causes women to remain back and silent.

Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* keenly looks at the sexual discrimination prevalent in all over the English society. So she dramatizes the powerlessness of women of her time by exposing the real picture of their pathetic conditions. Women like Mrs. Bannet have no option except completely being dependent on their husbands. The portrayal of conventional role of women, nicely explored by Austen in the novel has been the impact of Romantic writers. The Romantic belief about inferior status of women smoothly

perpetuated in the nineteenth century about which Gilbert and Guber in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1991) argue as such:

Austen shows how popular romantic fiction contributes to the traditional notion that women have no other legitimate aim but to love men and how this assumption is at the root of “female” narcissism, masochism, and deceit. She could hardly have set out to create a more heretical challenge to societal definitions of the feminine. (118)

Gilbert and Guber clearly specify the role of Romantic fiction to reinforce the patriarchal values in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to subjugate women to men, which Austen explores in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* displays the women characters who do not dare to think, argue, and rebel against the parameters assigned to them. Mrs. Bannet can not question Mr. Bannet though he takes her as intellectually inferior. Miss Bingley has passion for dress and fashion. Miss Darcy can not realize her own existence and has to live under the supervision of her brother, Mr. Darcy. Lydia is fond of being in love and elopes with Mr. Wickham who later manipulates her for his personal interest. Almost all female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* seem victimized in the maze of the male ideologies because patriarchy can not tolerate women's individual freedom. It is obvious how much gender discrimination is deep-rooted in the male's psyche. The very gender discrimination bestows the male with power whereas females are left helpless and powerless.

Jane Austen has masterfully dramatized the powerlessness of women in, *Pride and Prejudice*. Most of the women in the book never go in power nor do they have the

idea to exercise the power. As a result, they remain cut off from the political right as well. All these female characters internalize the male values and never attempt to understand the values of power nor do they question them. In spite of realizing the male violence upon them, such women can not question due to lack of social power.

In fact Austen was not satisfied with the social predicament that women were deprived of their fundamental rights which they needed to enhance their intellectual power. They were motivated to be sentimental and emotional in order to please males. Austen through *Pride and Prejudice* hits her dissatisfaction against the society that compelled women to restrict in powerless and pathetic existence.

Every trivial occasion in the novel reminds us that the women are dependent on their father or brothers even for the tiny task. Not possessing or controlling the means of transportation, Elizabeth is defined as different from the poorest man of her neighborhood, who has to convey her plan if she intends to do something. Indeed, what distinguishes women from men is invariably their lack of liberty.

Pride and Prejudice discloses the genuine plight of women that they are in social traps in all aspects of life. Therefore female's survival often depends on the male's approval. By justifying the very truth, Gilbert and Guber in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984) write:

Aware that male superiority is far more than a fiction, she defers to the economic, social, and political power of men as she dramatizes how and why female survival depends on gaining male approval and protection. All the heroines who reject inadequate fathers are engaged in a search for

better, more sensitive men who are, nevertheless still the representatives of authority. (154)

The economic, social and political power of men tends to make women inferior. Due to the lack of all these powers in women, they are compelled to seek for the male's favor for even for their insignificant existence.

Lydia Bannet becomes a victim of patriarchal ideologies as well. She is attributed more with emotion and passion rather than reason. She elopes with Mr. Wickham who exercises his patriarchal power upon her as she appears powerless. Lydia's behavior shows her to: "be deliberately engaging in an elopement, without the intention of marriage, "Elizabeth "had no difficulty in believing that neither her virtue nor her understanding would preserve her from falling an easy prey" (212). She can do nothing to Mr. Wickham when he refuses her to marry. Being male, Mr. Wickham does not agree to marry her till his conditions are not fulfilled even after elopement.

In many respects he is attracted to Elizabeth because somehow he acts as doubles natured. He believes that a young man must learn to please, and narcissist women. He experiences traditionally "feminine" powerlessness and he is, therefore especially interested in becoming a creator of his owns.

The female's realization of powerlessness emerges through their detachment from economic deals. The male-oriented property laws create pathetic circumstances to women which can apparently be noticed in Mrs. Bannet's complaints: "I cannot bear to hear that mentioned. Pray do not talk of that odious man. I do think it is the hardest thing in the world that your estate should be entailed away from your own children; and I am sure if I had been you, I should have tried long ago to do something or other about it" (46).

Mrs. Bannet realizes her and her own daughters' plight that they have to be banished from their estate only because they have no male claim. Though Mrs. Bannet "continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about" (46), she can do nothing. Her action and realization mean nothing in the patriarchal scenario of the time.

Ignoring the political and economic activities of men throughout the history, Austen implies that history may very well be a uniform drama of males posturing that is no less a fiction than gothic romance. In the same context Gilbert and Guber mention in their *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984): "Austen realizes that history and politics, which are completely beyond the reach of women's experience, are far from sanctified by such a divorce" (134). Austen suggests that the fiction of history is finally a matter of indifference to women who never participate in it and who are almost completely absent from its pages. The female characters in the novel are cut off from politics; neither have they taken interest in it. The powerlessness of females is primarily responsible for their inferior status. Females are made submissive to be ruled. They are isolated from their fundamental rights which they require for their independent survival.

Austen writes, not because she disagrees with the confinement of women, but because she believes that women have been imprisoned more effectively by false education than by walls and more by financial dependence, which is the authentic ancestral curse, than by any verbal oath or warning. Her *Pride and Prejudice* is based on England which ridicules and repudiates the patriarchal politics.

In Austen's time, the English society was conservative and it was controlled and moved by males. Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* explores issues of love and marriage as

the major components to entrap women into social boundaries. The issues of superficial love and marriage are the means of making women inferior.

The problem posed in what might be called the first movement of the novel is the marrying off the elder Bannet girls. They have beauty and intelligence, but inconsiderable fortune. Mrs. Bannet desires to have them married well. Moreover, the girls have the negligible fortune gently brought up must secure their own men while they may face precarious shabby-genteel spinsterhood with few opportunities of personal satisfaction or social esteem.

Austen thus depicts the traditional mode of marriage in which females are often bound to consent on the role of the traditional wife. The marriage in Austen's time was absolutely patriarchal where women had to seek their social and economic security under male supervision in spite of their intensive potentialities.

Pride and Prejudice entirely deals with the issue of love and marriage. Austen unfolds the novel with the problem of marriage of Bannet girls which is pretty clear in the following lines: "However little known the feelings or views such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the mind of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property some one or other of their daughters" (1).

Mr. Bannet and Mrs. Bannet are obsessed with the idea of marrying their daughters. They often appear in quest of a rich bachelor for their daughters who can provide them with economic security. Mrs. Bannet's obsession of marriage regarding her daughters gets more apparent when she says, "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield [...] and all the others equally well married, I shall have

nothing to wish for”(5). The daughters happen to be burden for the parents in the patriarchal society because women are never considered equal to men and are never provided with equal opportunities and position like men. So females are made submissive wives to take shelter in the marriage institution for their secure future.

Austen considers marriage crucial because it is the only accessible form of self-definition for girls in her society. Because of hegemony of patriarchal ideologies, women remain in pathetic conditions. There they eventually see the minimal security of their life in the marriage institution. Gilbert and Guber in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984) clarify the very truth:

Austen attempted through self-imposed novelistic limitation to define a secured place, even as she seemed to admit the impossibility of actuality inhabiting such a small place with any degree of comfort. And always, for Austen, it is women – because they are too vulnerable in the world at large – who must acquiesce in their own confinement, no matter how stifling it may be. (108)

Austen justifies the women’s pathetic conditions in the of marriage institution. Women can do nothing against the patriarchal hegemony except asserting themselves on patriarchal norms. Indeed, Austen’s silence on all other subjects becomes itself a kind of statement that proves how deficient lives girls and women have.

These various incidents in *Pride and Prejudice* make it clear that woman’s ‘self’ in Austen’s time was affected by patriarchal ideologies. Elizabeth Bannet and other female characters do not have their separate identifications from males in the beginning of the text. Their identity and marriage base on the patriarchal norms and values. They

are what the society has made them to be. The female protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet emerges as an awakened and revolutionary human being through her experience regarding the precarious plight of women in the male constructed society. But ultimately she becomes a victim of the patriarchal tradition as well. She accepts the traditional marriage institution and marries with Mr. Darcy.

In the beginning Elizabeth Bennet rejects Mr. Collins' proposal of marriage and shows her revolutionary attitudes towards patriarchal ideologies but finally accepts Mr. Darcy's proposal of marriage simply because Mr. Darcy can provide all sorts of securities to her. Even though the marriage should be based on the equal respect and care of spouses, Elizabeth Bennet's position and status base on the strength of her husband. She has no individual identity because patriarchal trend of marriage looks down upon women.

Pride and Prejudice is primarily concerned with the social fabric of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England's patriarchal society when men held the economic and social power. In a satirical portrait of men and women attempting to gain livelihood, Austen subtly and ironically points out faults in the system, questioning the values of the English society and its power structure.

Austen successfully depicts women's security and betterment within the marriage institution. The opening line of *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," tells us about the outset that the plot centers around marriage"(1). Austen sees marriage as only a safe place for women to have their existence guaranteed in the patriarchal society. The opening phrase reminds us of the fact that women can only exist with the financial support of their husbands. Therefore, they are bound to consent on the

role of traditional wife. Referring to the very truth of the patriarchal society, Yasmine Gooneratne in his *Jane Austen* (1970) says:

Jane Austen holds up for in this way, society's tendency to place a price, quite blatantly and complacently, on an intimate human relationship such as marriage. With its implicit protest at a corrupt social morality, her opening sentence sets out one of the novel's major themes, and hints at Elizabeth Bennet's coming struggle to preserve her personality from socially countenanced attack and exploitation by her elders. (45)

The women of Austen's time had to face various social and moral obstacles posed on by patriarchal norms. The girls like Elizabeth Bennet had to struggle a lot to preserve their personalities in the male-oriented society. So Austen tends to promote females through the positive aspects of marriage.

Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* directs the patriarchal tradition to heighten women's status. Elizabeth observes and analyzes the male domination upon female so critically. She eagerly learns how the women like her mother, Mrs. Bennet are exploited emotionally in terms of social norms and values.

Elizabeth Bennet seeks autonomy in the patriarchal society where she experiences the male's patronizing attitudes towards females and then struggles to protect her from being entrapped in the social biased boundary. Austen demonstrates Elizabeth Bennet as a capable and intelligent woman who can handle her problems herself. When Mr. Collins forwards the marriage proposal to Elizabeth, she instantly rejects it. As a matter of fact she does not consider him a suitable person for her husband despite her mother's full

readiness to give her hands to Mr. Collins. Elizabeth Bennet thus shows her attitudes towards the marriage proposal:

I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. - You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make *you* so. (82)

Being self-conscious, Elizabeth Bennet distinguishes herself from the rest of women in her society. She is not receptive to male ideologies and makes decisions for her further steps regarding her career. In Austen's time, women were not free to choose their life partners themselves. It means that they were even deprived of their inborn rights. So Austen, through Elizabeth Bennet intends to awaken women regarding this genuine aspect of the human being. Although Elizabeth Bennet has 'become a symbol of culture, it is shocking how persistently Austen demonstrates her discomfort with her cultural inheritance, specifically her dissatisfaction with the tight place assigned women in patriarchy and her analysis of the economics of sexual exploitation' (Gilbert and Guber, *The Madwoman in the Attic* 112). Due to the biological difference women are socially and economically marginalized and made inferior to men.

Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* presents a typical female character Lady Catherine De Bourgh who stands against the patriarchal culture. She acts powerfully and raises voices against perilous aspects of patriarchy. She protects her rights and faces challenges boldly. Gilbert and Guber describe in *The Madwomen in the Attic*:

Most of these powerful windows would agree with Lady Catherine De Bourgh in seeing “no occasion for entailing estates from the female lines” (PP, II, 6). Opposed to the very basis of patriarchy, the exclusive right of male inheritance, Lady Catherine quite predictably earns the vilification always allotted by the author to the representatives of matriarchal power.

(172)

Both Lady Catherine and Elizabeth are surprisingly similar. Lady Catherine points out when she says to Elizabeth, “You give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person” (128). Both of them speak authoritatively. Both are sarcastic and insistent in their assessment of people. Elizabeth describes herself to Darcy by asserting, “There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others” (134), and in this respect too Elizabeth Bennet resembles Lady Catherine, whose courage is indomitable. Finally, the women are capable of feeling and expressing genuine anger, although it is up to Lady Catherine to articulate rage against entailment that Elizabeth must feel since it has so rigidly restricted women’s lives. When Elizabeth and Lady Catherine meet in conflict, each retains her decided resolution of carrying her own purpose.

On the one hand Austen presents female characters to use silence as a means of manipulation, passivity as a tactics to gain power, submission as a means of attaining the only control available to them, they seem to submit as they get what both of them want and need and on the other hand, it is painful degradation for women to be confined to the patriarchal marriage institution.

Thus Austen relates women's identity and existence with the male's approval. She exhibits women's existence in the married life which can provide them social and economic security. Thus they accept their subordinate and inferior position. Gilbert and Guber in *The Madwomen in the Attic* specify: "Austen's cover story of the necessity for silence and submission reinforces women's subordinate position in patriarchal culture" (154). Austen's belief about women's submission is not sufficient to subvert patriarchal ideologies to make women free.

Elizabeth Bennet is slightly revolutionary but she herself finally succumbs before the patriarchy. She has to submit her subjectivity to her husband for happy married life. Elizabeth's marriage with Mr. Darcy is not of equal partners rather Elizabeth has to live a life of subordination to her husband.

Austen demonstrates women's split between the conflicting desires for assertion in the world and retreat into security of the home - speech and silence, independence and dependency. Certainly, Elizabeth Bennet is 'confronted with similar dilemma even as she eventually reach' the traditional 'strategies for survival' (Gilbert and Guber, *The Madwoman in the Attic* 162). The patriarchal ideologies compel Elizabeth to discard her self-identity for her safe survival.

Austen has tried to depict women's empowerment but failed to extend their autonomy beyond the domestic periphery. She considers women's role and position in only domestic affairs. Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* shows the actual pathetic and miserable life of women in the patriarchal society of her time and forwards Elizabeth in the patriarchal culture where she is still socially inferior since numerous male ideologies have surrounded her in a very strong way. In the process of portraying the precise

countenance of the society Austen has indirectly focused on the issue of some compulsions of women regarding the secure life in the male-dominated society. Along with this she has even presented a solution to the genuine problem of females that is to say the marriage institution since it reaches the criterion of the patriarchal society. It has been so since the writer was herself enslaved in the hands of the male ideologies in her time. She was in the time when women were deprived of using their rational faculty in the social, political and economic affairs. She had bitter experience regarding the patriarchic ideologies which in fact energized her to inscribe the text *Pride and Prejudice*. At the same time the irremovable impact of patriarchy was on Austen in such a way that she unconsciously expressed in *Pride and Prejudice*. Despite her intentional efforts to strengthen women's position and uplift the level of their thought, she indeed failed to do so. In this way other various incidents indicate Austen's attempt for empowering women to the extent she was able to through exposing intrinsic probabilities on the part of females.

IV. CONCLUSION

Austen's novels like *Pride and Prejudice* have established the foundation for modern feminists. From the keen study of *Pride and Prejudice*, it is concluded that her utmost concern is centered on women in relation to men and the society they live in. Austen focuses on women and their analytical perspective to women's problems. Hence she argues and raises the issues of sexual discrimination, biased social structure and unequal economic structure.

Elizabeth Bennet, the mouthpiece of *Pride and Prejudice*, dominates the text. She is the pioneer woman character who is capable of analyzing her position in the patriarchal society. In spite of her rational faculty, she is victimized in the patriarchal society. Not only Elizabeth Bennet but other female characters meet the same fate as well. Their ways of working and behaving are like that of ancient women. They have passion for dress, dancing and music rather than laboring for rationality and intelligence. Miss Lydia Bennet is inconstant in love with Mr. Wickham and later elopes with him for the sake of love but Mr. Wickham imposes his male attitudes on her. It is overtly the male hegemony.

After the elopement he uses Miss Lydia for his own benefit. He exercises his manly power to deceive women like Lydia. Similarly Miss. Charlotte Lucas is another woman in *Pride and Prejudice* who happily accepts the role of the conventional wife and lives under the supervision of her husband Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet, a mother of five daughters lives a miserable and dependent life. She accepts her subordinate role as a wife in the male-dominated culture. Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Miss. Georgiana Darcy are other female characters in *Pride and Prejudice* who represent the conventional females.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh is impressed with male values and therefore she cultivates her daughter through traditional education that suits and benefits the males whereas Miss. Georgiana Darcy has to act as Mr. Darcy instructs her. Being under the influence of male ideologies, Jane Bennet seeks shelter in a socially- constructed institution via marriage institution.

During Austen's time, women's condition was miserable. They were neglected socially, politically and economically. They were regarded as a second sex, inferior to male. Their roles were confined to domestic affairs. The society wanted to keep women as sources of entertainment and pleasure for males. Austen in *Pride and Prejudices* pictures the real conditions of women basically who were in the contemporary society. Through her protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, Austen depicts how women need to seek their own fate in patriarchal society. She delivers a lesson for women in her society that female position can be promoted with economic support in marriage institution.

Austen tries to empower women but ultimately asserts them under patriarchal traditions. Elizabeth Bennet, in *Pride and Prejudices* acts revolutionarily against male values but she ultimately accepts the role of conventional wife where she has to still live inferior life to her husband's. Austen focuses on the issue of women's compulsion regarding the security of their life and considers marriage as a safe place to women for their minimal chance of social involvement. Due to the female's absence in social, political, and economic affairs, women are bound to consent on their inferior and subordinate role constructed by male -governed society. In this way, various incidents in the novel indicate Austen's attempt for empowering women but patriarchal ideologies stand as obstacles in uplifting the women's status.

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