

1. Introduction: Politics of Austen's Women

Jane Austen's novels *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* are the focal areas of this research. These novels attempt to depict Jane Austen's use of politics from the perspective of marginalized women. Such politics cuts both ways: from the position of marginalized feminine world, Austen deconstructs the masculinist patriarchal centre most of the time, but sometime she, as a product of that very society, also remains critical of feminist moves, that seems to go radically beyond the patriarchal norms. Whether or not the society confirms the role of her female characters, she always brings the feminine values on the main stream either critically or admiringly with deliberate marginalization of that of masculine.

So, rather than viewing the society from a militant feminist perspective or sentimentalizing the victimization of women in a way that adds a certain luster to male domination and reinforces the masculine mystique, she succeed in making woman the normative centre. Sarah R. Morrison, a very recent critic, favors Jane Austen's way of maltreatment of the male characters for the sake of centrality of women that she remarks, "In fact, the deliberate and consistent marginalization of exclusively male experience is perhaps the only realistic technique that could so effectively establish the centrality of women's experience in Austen's fictional world" (343). Therefore, this term politics is taken as a multiple feminist performances by the women characters in these novels of her.

Austen's double approach is well portrayed through Emma and Elizabeth Bennet like characters in *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* respectively that, by subverting their prescribed roles, appear as the woman instructing a man like William Darcy and Mr. Knightley, one who according to the psyche of that prevailing society should be her superior in judgment. Darcy, her male character in *Pride and Prejudice*,

undergoing a radical re-adjustment so as to become at last a suitable companion for her, shows a reversal of the male-female role characteristics.

Similar story appears in *Sense and sensibility*; the business-oriented Edward Ferrars the hero, was cut off from his business world and brought to Austen's feminine world, the world of domestic pleasure and human relationship which the society has assigned as the responsibility for women only. These heroes are in the novel not for their heroism rather merely a joker fitted wherever and whenever needed to the heroines. Even the trivial things like party, ball and marriage is shown colorfully dragging all the males into its periphery. In fact, men are of secondary importance in the novels, however useful they may be to the plot they are cut off from the main stream to show predominance of the women, and male experience becomes relevant only in so far as it confirms the “feminine” truth.

At the same time, through Mrs. Bennet, Mrs. Jennings and Emma like characters she shows her critical attitude towards her own women's circles. She exposed them as typical gossiping characters representing the follies of the then women's society, which she wants to bring out through her self-mocking undertones. Emma, though herself the protagonist of the novel *Emma*, shown as funny character because Austen do not want to isolate her characters from the society by making her completely rebellious rather wants them to celebrate within their own femino-centric environment. In fact, she herself is not away from that male-dominated society and such reflections are generally found through her characters in their laughing tones. Her politics of mocking on own self not only functions as self-realization for the marginalized but even bring them to the consciousness of the world.

The very first page of *Emma* covers almost all the women related to her, even details of her governess is given first, then only somewhere on the third page her

father (male) is dealt. Moreover, despite of the numerous misdeeds on the later part of the novel she is represented as flawless at the beginning as to avoid her being distracted from the reader. She starts her novel exaggeratingly praising Emma, as “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 to distress or vex her”(3). Austen’s readers are bound to take the side of Emma or rather say all her female characters, as, the whole plot move around them and the readers must go side-by-side to the writer.

After Emma’s powerful entry, Austen moves towards a brief introduction of her mother who died too early then she, ignoring her father moves towards Miss Taylor a governess, whose influence to Emma is greater than her father. “. . . they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor’s judgment, but directed chiefly by her own” (3). This indicates that her father though the head of the house, holds less value for Emma than that of Miss Tylor and herself. In a way, Austen shows authoritative voice of her female characters in her novels limiting the voices, even the roles of the male characters.

On the other hand, Emma’s father is portrayed as a passive character Austen, taking the side of Emma clearly states that “She dearly loved her father, but he was no companion for her. He could not meet her in conversation, rational or playful” (5). She adds more “The evil of the actually disparity in their ages (and Mr. Woodhouse had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his

heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time” (5). Her strategy of minimizing their roles and making them passive not only helped to bring the female character at the centre of attraction but also promote them in active roles from which they were deprived of before.

Similar, type of satirical definition is found about Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* which says “Mr. Bennet was a 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” (21). Austen’s target in her novels always appears as not to highlight the male characters however high values they hold. Mr. Bennet is there merely for his surname because all the fiction circle around Mrs. and Miss. Bennets and he is given very less to speak, claiming him as a passive person. But then Austen also don’t want her characters being totally alienated from their society so there are characters like Jane Bennet completely designed according to the established norms.

On the same time, she has done justice to the women by bringing out the harsh reality of the women world; that they are shown excited only in the frivolities of households and totally unaware of the outer real world. That was the real condition of the women of those days and this is the reason for them to be at margin, as patriarchy never let them to come out of the prescribed environment and women internalized their imposed role as their fate. Austen on the other hand gave one after another such novels through which the women could mirror their face and arouse their emotions for their ill-treatment by the patriarchy.

Her mocking words for Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* “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 daughters married; its solace was visiting and news” (21), perhaps hinted or pinched many of the women there. From her novel various women probably could identify their flaws even their status in their society. In fact, awareness is the nascent stage of revolution. Until and unless ones get acquainted with his/her fault and the fault over them, he/she could not work out for remedy. This work of self- realization for those dominated women was done by Jane Austen. Such a perfect balance of her writings holds some traits of postmodern writers.

Jane Austen, (1775-1817) is one of the outstanding figure of Romantic Age of English Literature. She is taken as a best novelist having keen interest in social institution and feminine values. Though Austen has comparatively written a few novels, they are widely read. For her, human world was important. She never mentioned about Industrial Revolution or French Revolution which was going on those days. Perhaps she, in the era of various revolutions wants to soothe her readers from monotonous heroic novels by bringing novel of completely different taste, different characters and different faces. Wayne C. Booth with reference to *Emma* points out "Austen assures sympathetic identification with the heroine by making her the primary centre of consciousness" (124). Though she bought the women in the primary centre she herself was under a kind of societal restrictions and to come across it, her satire worked as a defensive measure. So, most of the critics today believe Austen's language holds full of dead and buried metaphor, drawn from commerce and property.

Feminine values like marriage, social interactions, human relationships, etc are always Austen's major concerns and of course, women are the crucial parts around whom the plot revolves. Her first novel *Sense and Sensibility* portrays two female characters of totally different temperaments: revolting and enduring. The whole plot

circles over two ladies finding their suitable companions. Elinor, who easily internalize the roles assigned by the society remaining docile, while Marianne, who tries to reject such restrictions and portrays herself as a bold character. Whereas, their partners Edward Ferrars, Brandon and even villain Willoughby are given very limited role to play. Though in some places, their heroes being business-oriented are mentioned but it is not highly focused, despite the heroes have to decline to the world where female and their concerns are highly admired. They are not allowed for free-play showing their masculine superiority instead they are shown fops and gallant always ready in the service of the women, making them inferior and flat characters.

The heroine, Elizabeth Bennet of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, is her father's closest companion and the moral centre of her family; she is at home with opinions and comfortable making judgment of the character. On the contrary, novel's hero William Darcy must undergo a radical re-adjustment so as to become at last a suitable companion for her i.e. as per the taste of female. Elizabeth like that of Marianne is shown as bold character rejecting patriarchal norms and Jane as Elinor holds the place of submission and even the villainous characters like Fanny Dashwood or Miss Bingley are also from the female side, forbidding herself and her readers from the danger of distraction from the female world.

Similar, type of femino-centric narration is found in *Emma*. A twenty-one years young lady, Emma is well accomplished with intelligence, wits, beauty, wealth and position and she has the love of those around her. Indeed, she thinks her completely happy. The only threat to her happiness, a threat of which she is unaware is herself: charming as she is, she can neither see her own excessive pride honestly nor resist imposing herself on the lives of others. She is deficient in both generosity and in

self-knowledge. Every section is devoted to her misdeeds, yet, she must remain sympathetic toward the readers.

Thus, through this self-reflexive satire, Austen keeps her distance from the discourse of authority, the patriarchal mode of imposing oneself through language. By portraying either good or bad, Austen wants to celebrate feminine environment rather wasting time and concern for the male. The male characters like Mr. Martin and Mr. Elton are kept as the pendulum hanging to and fro around the females. Thus, showing most of the story through Emma's eyes, Austen insures that we shall travel with Emma, rather than stand against her.

The major criticism on Jane Austen is based on Woman Problem. The supporters of this radical view have introduced that Austen explores Woman Problem. This hypothesis was attempted to prove by the critics like Lionel Trilling, David Daiches, and Patricia Thomas in 1940s and 1950s. Mary Allman, one of the feminists point out that Austen is only for mockery, of the domestic ideal. Similarly, Robert Denovan describes Austen as concerned with feminine heroism . . . (42).

Though it lacks further evidences yet in early 1970s Austen's indication in women problem is ultimately identified by several critics. Loyd Brown in his essay, "*Jane Austen and Feminist Tradition*" shows her as: a feminist . . . (321-322). He further claims that her themes are comparable to Mary Wollstonecraft. To conclude the issue of feminism, the idea of Maria Fowler is ultimately relevant one. She argues in "The Feminist Basis of *Pride and Prejudice*" that Austen closely resembles the Feminist writer of the 1970s (47). Thus, the recent trend of criticism takes Jane Austen as a feminist writer of Romantic and Neo-classic period of English literature, who concerns for the women more than abusing the men.

2. Austen's Women and Margin

Feminist criticism was taken seriously only when, feminism 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. This approach undermines the hegemony of the masculinist literature by voicing and critically analyzing the literature from the margin, so as to reconstruct or redraw the boundaries of the American Literature. Through their resisting or negotiating feminine portrayal, feminist attempt to create their own feminine world of which they proudly celebrate.

Berasley points out that 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. It is

from the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writings to the present, the female tends 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 enjoined upon women a humility and meekness that in Christian term paradoxically granted them a moral ascendancy, and the historical development similarly grants a new moral authority to traditional feminine (domestics, personal, unworldly) 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. Such false practice severely comes under the attacked of female critics demanding for their equal existence.

The issues like masculine and feminine are largely the cultural constructs. As

Simon de Beauvoir puts "one is not born but rather becomes, a woman . . . 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 in the form of laughter, mockery and satire on the women in her novels.

An important precursor of feminist criticism is Virginia Woolf whose opinion in various places meets to that of Austen's who rather than abusing the male 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 the women writers. Rejecting a feminist consciousness, she hopes to achieve a balance between a male "self-realization" and female "self-annihilation" (822). She has revealed the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society. A male dominated society always prevents the women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. Woolf addresses the question of why a sister of Shakespeare would not likely to have been to write anything" (817). She also focuses that language used is gendered, so that when a women turns to novel writing, she finds no common sentence ready for her use.

Virginia Wolf's central argument is that women do not have money and room of their own. They do not have separate space for writing. She admired the seventeenth century writers and eighteenth century novelists like Bronte sisters, Jane Austen, George Eliot, etc. They are praiseworthy for their courage to create such good novels despite the

less experience of life, common sitting room and the lack of money. She emphasizes that the women feel just as men feel. The women need exercise for faculties as much as their brothers do. According to her, literature is open to everybody. She opines that libraries can be locked but the freedom of woman's mind cannot be locked. Woolf 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 brother do; they suffer from too rigid restraints, 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 sex.(822)

Her minute observation on the female writers not only created a space for the women but also make them at the centre of awareness to the readers.

Where the various later critics like Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir lament for women being exploited in the hand of the male and even the female writers, (as they have always presented as passive or docile characters), there Austen as a postmodernist writer, celebrates presenting them powerful on that very femino-centric world. In *A Vindication of the Rights of the women*, Wollstonecraft discusses the pernicious impact of the sentimental novels in the lives of the women in the eighteenth century. These novels present the women as passive beauty and lacking intellectual faculty. While the man is presented as active, intellectual, rational and dominant in decision-making, the woman lacks the power of decision-making. Therefore, she chooses a rake, luxury and a brave person. She clearly 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.

Similar, but much more radical criticism has been launched in France by Simon de Beauvoir. She makes wide ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or, "other"(993). She views that men treat themselves as "subject" who is assumed to represent humanity as dealt in "the great collective myths" of women in the work of male writers (993). Beauvoir's *The Second sex* (1949) is scholarly and passionate plea for the abolition of the myth of the "eternal feminine" (999). This seminal work has become a classic of feminist literature where she establishes the fundamental issues of modern feminism by arguing that man defined human, not woman.

She further says that women are not born women. Woman is woman is just a gender concept. But gender itself is nothing but a social or cultural construction. Beauvoir attacks the parochial concept of man possessing his freedom and transcendence but a woman being doomed to immanence. She refuses the notion of a female essence prior to individual existence. She has attacked the patriarchal myths of the women:

To say that woman is a mystery is to say, not that she is silent, but that her language is not understood, she is there but hidden behind veils; she

exists beyond these uncertain appearances. What is she? Angel, demon, one inspired, an actress . . . but one considers woman in her immanent presence, her inward self, and one can say absolutely nothing about her. She falls short of having any qualification. (998)

Though Jane Austen lived much earlier than any phases classified by Elaine Showalter but her works gets fitted in her last phase that is “female” phase. Elaine Showalter, an American literary critic and founder of “Gynocriticism”, has identified three historical phases of women's development:

The "feminine" phase (1840-80), during which women writers imitated the dominant tradition; the "feminist" phase (1880-1920), during which women advocated minority rights and protested; and the female phase (1920-present), during which dependency on opposition - that is, on uncovering misogyny in male texts-is being replaced by a rediscovery of women's texts and women.(Guerin 198)

Showalter describes a woman's tradition in literature that is an "imaginative continuum of certain patterns, themes, problems and images from generation to generation "(223).

She further identifies four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. In biological model she claims if the text mirrors the body, this can reduce women merely to bodies. Yet Showalter praise their bodies with intimate frankness and their confessional tone to rebuke the patriarchal construction. Her *linguistic* model of difference posits women speaking men's language as a foreign tongue. It generates a sense of alienation in the women. Therefore, she advocates that women do not have own separate "female" language. Her *psychoanalytic* model identifies gender difference as the basis of the psyche that emphasizes the relation of

gender to the artistic process. It stresses feminine difference as the free play of meaning outside the need of closure.

Showalter's most important contribution has been the *cultural* model that places feminist concerns in social test. It acknowledges class, racial, nation and historical differences and determinants among women. But her focus is on offering a collective experience that unites women over time and space as "a binding force"(Guerin 200).

Speaking for the representation of the marginalized female, Showalter invents gynocriticism where women appear as writers. Such criticism eschews the inevitability of male models and theories and seeks a female model. It is related to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology and sociology, all of which have develop hypotheses of female sub-culture including not only the ascribed status and the internalized constructs of femininity, but also the occupations, interactions and consciousness of women.

It is to develop new models based on the study of the female experiences rather than adopt male models and theories. Such gynocentric criticism concentrates on female creativity, stylistics, themes, images, careers, and literary tradition. Such new emphasis has begun with the rediscovery of neglected or forgotten female writers. It has been grown to redefine gender in literary studies. On this basis we can also categorize Jane Austen as a gynocritic, who dam to bother the male experiences instead brings the genuine pleasure out of her race i.e. women. She neither abuse nor admire the male characters giving them any importance at all, rather gets satisfied within her own female boundaries.

Currently, there are four types of pervasive feminist criticisms: gender studies, Marxist studies, psychoanalytic studies, and minority studies. Feminist has argued

that mainstream though is simply a part of three ongoing processes: excluding, marginalizing, and trivializing women and their accounts of social and political life. The bottom of all this subordination is the lack of freedom. Marriage has become one of the bondages that restrict women from realizing her independent self. Men have defined it as a legal authority over women. Feminist address this issue to instill a sense of human existence that is devoid of sexual business. That is why we find Austen always mocking on the concept of marriage.

Women are trying to attack male writing as well as they are seeking redefinition of their identity in their writing. Austen's way of opposing the male writing is satirical against status quo, because in many places despite of their limited role to play, she succeed to depict them as a foolish character; just take the example of *Emma*, the father at last accepts the marriage of his daughter because he was saved from being theft and there he immediately realize the importance of his son-in-law, otherwise he was totally against his daughter's marriage, even she consider marriage a centre of celebration. Her outburst for the male of that society is also hidden somewhere in her treatment of the male characters and her bringing them in the social participation.

Similar kind of anxiety is shown by two contemporary feminists Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar who has made an extensive study of women writers. Their influential work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1974), explores the pressure psycho an "anxiety of authorship" when they talk about the feminist poetics (1234). They assert that their anxiety is more pronounced because the women writers have to struggle against the effect of socialization as a struggle against man's oppressive reading of the women. Here, they seem to address Austen also, as her concern towards human relationship is as the result of her lack of outer world. She is so confined to her social

institution that she had to revolt on the behalf of marginalized women, staying within the prescription of the society.

They also talk about the social anxieties, physical and mental illness. After all they posit the problems of women writer in the patriarchal culture and tradition.

Gilbert and Gubar assert:

The woman writer feels herself to be figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives [of] her culture and crippling effects of her conditioning sometimes seem to 'breed' like sentences of death in the bloody shoes inherits from her literary foremothers. Therefore critics see 'infection in sentence breed' (1242).

The duo, Gilbert and Gubar see the disease and diseases accompany the symptoms of "anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia"(1242). All these illness are the consequences of inescapable chains of patriarchy. Finally they state that the literary women have always faced degrading option with female limitation. So they posit that "the woman writer seems locked into the discovering double bind: she had to choose between admitting she was only a woman and protesting that she was as good as a man"(1244). Furthermore, Gilbert and Gubar point out how the monster/mad women figure represents aspects of the author as well as element of the author's anti-patriarchal wholeness rather than theory of "otherness" that prevails as definition of identity.

Likewise, various critics attempted to redraw the English Literature by garnering and uniting the voices from the oppressed part. The French critics practice "écriture féminine" as a tool to uphold the power of psychological category of the femininity. They dismiss the actual sex of an author as important following deconstructive attack upon the author or the shelf. The French feminists see feminism

in its binary oppositions as male cultural notion left over the past. They focus on Jacques Lacan's notion of imaginary, a pre-Oedipal stage in which child has not yet differentiated himself or herself from the mother and has accordingly not yet learned language. This Oedipal crisis as Lacan says:

the entrance of the child into a world of symbolic order in which everything is separate, including unconscious and conscious, self and other, words and actions. This transition also marks entry into world ruled by the "law of the father," "isms" or rules that confine us.

(Guerin 204)

Lacan calls it the phallogocentric universe. The imaginary is the realm of feminine and is the vital source of language, which is tamed and codified by the laws of the Father.

The relevance of Freud and Lacan for French feminism arises from their treatment of language Lacan describes the unconscious as structured like a language. When we speak language we may identify gaps in what is signified as evidence of the unconscious, for language is mixture of fixed meanings and metaphors. "Femininity" is then a language that destabilizes sexual categories. The *écriture féminine* disrupts the unities if western discourse is pointing to its silences: French feminists speak of 'exploding' the sign rather than interpreting signs.

French feminist who follow Lacan, particularly Helen Cixous, propose a "utopian place, a primeval female space that is free of symbolic order, sex roles, otherness, and the law of the Father and voice of the other"(204). Cixous' pronouncement "sisters, write with the white milk of your mothers", marks the importance of women's body not only as a subject of writing but also the energy and the instrument of writing (Sheldom151). She contends this, the source of feminine writings. It is the source to gain access to find a source of immeasurable feminine

power. Cixous posits the existence of an incipient "feminine writing" (*écriture féminine*) that has its source in the mother. She says that the stage of mother-child relation is the real world before the child acquires the male centered verbal language.

In her view as in Abrams's glossary,

the prelinguistic and unconscious potentiality manifest itself in those written texts, which undermines the fixed signification . . . These writings subvert the logic and the "closure our phallogocentric language, and open out into a joyous free play of meanings (92-3).

The major interest of Jane Austen and other feminist critics is to reconstitute the ways we deal with literature in order to do justice to the female points of views, concerns and values. It is to establish a "re-visionary re-reading", to bring to light and to counter the covert sexual biases according to the literary work of Abrams.

Julia Kristeva, a recent critic also holds similar concept of marginality. She opposes the tendency of male-controlled repressive language to create status quo against the women for their role. Like that of Jane Austen's femino-centric world, Kristeva also describes a mother-centered realm of expression as the semiotic as opposed to the symbolic law of father. Kristeva opposes phallogocentrism with the images derived from women's corporeal experiences. She posits "a chora", or pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal and unsystematized signifying process, centered on the mother, that she labels "semiotic" (205). The father-controlled, syntactically ordered and logical language known as symbolic repress the semiotic process. This process can break out in a revolutionary way as a "heterogeneous destructive causality" that disrupts and disperses the authoritarian "subject". It stresses for the world free of oppressive order and rationality of our standard discourse. It is the product of the "law of the father" that consigns women to negative and marginal status. Kristeva makes

the succinct observations that “a mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh “(94). In fact, Julia Kristeva very optimistically characterizes future of feminism as one with a utopian vision where “many voices are always speaking, and that each individual can have many voices” (Bizelland qtd. In Guerin 206)

Thus, these various critics have attempted to create their own feminine world or literature either by being militant or being liberal feminist. Everyone holds the same common instance of redrawing the rigid boundary of male culture, male language even the male society and bring the marginalized women to the main stream. And Jane Austen, the precursor of this movement, through her novels like *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* succeed to established a new world of women and their values. She undermines the conventional role of the women as Medusa, Cassandra, and Isis and made her own varieties of characters; they may be docile, meek, rebellious, mocking, satirical etc according to the degree of her internalization or rejection of patriarchal values. Through this self-reflexive and satirical strategy, she kept her distance from the discourse of authority, the patriarchal mode of imposing oneself through language and hence eventually she succeeds to bring the marginalized to the centre, at the same time.

3. Women, Voices and Authority

3.1 Resisting and Negotiating Women

Jane Austen has presented her novels with a variety of the mannerism of the women, especially with two distinctly contrasting behavior, i.e. submissive and defensive. Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth, Emma, Marianne, Lydia lie on the former category whereas Elinor, Jane, Charlotte, Harriet lie on the other. The first category directly comes against the domination of the male, while the later accepted their condition as it is. However, within this category also, the attributions given to them are totally different from that of practiced before. They are shown sarcastically, some bold, some pitiful while some funny, but anyway, the major concern was always women and their being in this world. Their existence rather than manner was vividly focused. Rather than depicting them as a woman, she has made them appear as the human who have every provenance good, bad, docile or rebellious etc.

In the process of provoking the women for their fight for being, she has done a very plausible injustice to the men, which for its better part, appealed the justice to the marginalized women. She mentors the women in stage of her novels until and unless it hits the consciousness of every reader. Though, Jane Austen internalizes the unavoidable male hegemony prevailing there, her ignorance and indifference towards the male characters and the dominant culture, i.e. male culture, automatically brings centrality to the women. Where every female novelist like Burney, Amelia Opie, Bronte etc, easily digested this hegemonic culture as their fate and swayed as per the limitations of the society, there Austen with her idiosyncratic quality moved the society according to her creation, that neither refute nor applause the 'Male' of that rigid society.

Far from the prejudiced mind she lifts herself up bringing her at the edge,

which according to Spivak and Bhawa is the way to freedom. As they believe that Freedom is gained not on the either side but in ‘in-betweenness’-this is even the position of postmodern writers. So, taking the position of in-betweenness, she advocates from the perspective of women, who are long been enjoined with humility and meekness. And this position, the position of edge that I feel should bring her to the circle of postmodern writers. Furthermore, her witty dialogues, litotes and understatements are the strong pillars of her defense.

Indeed, it’s the language through which we can derive the multiplicity of meanings. Many critics find Austen’s works devoted toward her hypocritical society meanwhile other finds it revolutionary. However, in its deep structure, language is the means to reach the mind of the writer. Writers throughout the last half of the eighteenth century were searching for a kind of authenticity in the language that philosophy was rendering increasingly remote. The obsession with sensibility itself arises from an anxiety about the nature of selfhood that Locke’s theories had made inevitable and that eighteenth-century philosophy deepened and intensified. Such anxiety informs the literary concern with the relation of public to the private experience and with the public expression of private emotion in language, as the central problem for the writer of *Sensibility* - the ease with which language can subvert true feeling and the corollary threat that the self may have no meaning beyond its own limited consciousness-remain a problem for Austen as well. In her novels especially in *Sense and Sensibility*, she tries to solve the dilemma of her age in a manner both persuasive and sustaining.

Remaining a very fragile part of that unequal society, her approach of bringing the follies out from that very society is really commendable. After having the thorough study of Austen’s works, I also started believing that every time, harsh and coarse

attack is not the only language of protest but astute satirical words appears more dangerous. Several recent critics as G.H. Lewes, Richard Simpson and A. Walton Litz also have the same thing to say about her dialogue. Litz, taking the reference of Simpson acknowledges her, saying “He Recognizes the critical faculty, the power of wit and irony, as the secret of her art. Acknowledgement of the narrowness of Jane subjects, the unfurnished quality of her world, but like Lewes he finds this redeemed by her incomparable “art of telling” (673). Yes, the language of her is well focused towards her target i.e. the discourse of the authority, that her wits and undertones are always there as social control for the on going follies of those days that it without having any partiality includes both the male and female.

Really, especially in literature, language is the only medium through which even the buried silence can be taken out, as ones intention is always hidden inside his/her use of language. And Austen’s deliverance of language is incomparable, that she has the every ability of shooting the two birds with a single stone. Her intention of reversing the system and bring the marginalized up to the centre can easily be derived from her use of language. Let us focus on the opening sentence 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” (I, 19). It seems to the general reader that Austen giving the universal context must be highlighting the wants or choice of the male, which is considered to be important than that of the female; at the same time, I felt that she is going to bring out the story of the male who is in the process of searching a wife. But on the contrary, I was proven wrong, when I go through the novel. So, it is quite obvious that her novel is not predictable as per the norms of writings of that society. It is from here, her revolution and evolution starts.

There are many buried metaphors, which can be dug out from her writings, and

plain reading is not enough to reach her mind. Twain felt it as an animal repugnance, Lawrence thought her to be thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, means snobbish sense of words, Henry James disliked the Jane Austen cultists who found their dear our dear everybody's dear, Jane so infinitely to their material purpose - likewise Bronte, Garrod, Kingsley etc are also the active member of this group but instead almost in every case the adverse judgment merely reveals the special limitations or eccentricities of the critic, leaving Jane Austen relatively untouched.

However, I want to compare her to that of T.S Eliot's poem "The Wasteland" in which various references were brought simply to thwart and criticize the havoc condition of the world, such a fine skill of shrewd play of words is found in Austen's work too - that she inaugurate the novel, *Emma*, with the reference of male and at the same moment, she thwart by mocking on them. Well, the very second sentence can act as an evidence for my point, as she says "However little known the feeling or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families that he is considered as the rightful property of someone or other of their daughter" (I, 19). Now, truly speaking I have heard as well as read many times where women are considered to be man's property but a man considered to a women's, that is very well planned use of words which was possible on those days only for Austen. Her bringing down male in the category of a sellable commodity is her outburst towards the hegemonic society, expressed in the sugarcoated language.

We can also see the example of Frank Churchill of *Emma* - that he was kept as a very fine dream (as dream-boy) of the protagonist, Emma in the earlier part, whereas he was very soon shattered from his position and shown as a fop preferring to go London just only for his hair cut. Litotes found abundantly in her language are also

directed towards her motive. Well, this is the style of Jane Austen who is astute to put forwards her every agony with her muted mouth. Language is involved in giving and taking both power and pleasure can be proven from her writings.

Jane's style of condemning the so-called man is something different from her contemporary writers Mary Shelley, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte who are denounced by Mary Poovey like recent critics for their avoidance of an experience they knew at first hand which may point to the deeper anxieties about encroachment upon private space or the vulnerability of their self image. Further taking the favor of Austen they uttered that the very act of a woman writing during a period in which self-assertion was considered unlady like, exposes the contradiction inherent in propriety just as the inhibitions visible in her writings constitute a record of her historical oppression, so the work itself proclaims her momentary, possibly unconscious, but effective defiance. On one side of the horizon, we can infer the societal treatment towards the lady, who is seized from her right to speak for their own womanhood, on the other, we can observe Austen's mild counter attack towards it.

I believe realization is the way towards progress, so it is necessary for the human being to get aware of their deeds and misdeeds. In the lack of the proper myth and their criticisms women were lost into the blue. In such chaotic condition, Austen holding the hands of the women made them dance, act, party and laugh at the center of the stage till it captures the attention of every eye. Really, neither marred nor exaggerated, women are simply introduced in front the society as they are, totally without make-up. As we come across the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, we find the variety of mannerisms. Not a single girl there carries the same trait. I mean this is the quintessential work where we could derive what actually women are?

According to the Hindu mythology, there are various facets of women in a

form of Goddess, like- Goddess Saraswati for Knowledge, Goddess Laxmi for property and Goddess Kali for power, etc. similar varieties are found in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as, Jane Bennet as knowledgeable calm lady, Georgina and Madame de Bourgh as property holders and our Elizabeth Bennet as an icon of woman's power. Apart from these characters, others are presented as well: Miss. Bingley as envious, Charlotte as adaptive, Mrs. Bennet for comical relief, Mary introvert and pedantic also Lydia as aggressive and lewd creature etc.

Jane Bennet, though faced the indifference of her partner Mr. Bingley, kept patience without a utterance of grief in her lips in such heart breaking condition same as that of Marianne of *Sense and Sensibility*. She is of the nature who never thinks ill of others and easily swayed by the emotion. She, even after knowing Mr. Collins making two offers of marriage within three days, forgives him and also expected her sister to do so. She convinced her saying "I must think your language too strong in speaking of both," "and hopes you will be convinced of it, by seeing them happy together" (152). Likewise, knowing all the betrayal of Mr. Bingley, she didn't revolt rather awaited the right time to come. Hence, it was Bingley who have to change his opinion towards Jane for reunion. Such a notion of forgiveness and politeness are in the true sense, the ornaments of the women and Austen must be hinting the real status of the women; enduring, of that society.

Again, we can see Charlotte who in the apparently knows the formula of adaptation of that conventional society. Collins was not agreeable person nevertheless she planted the dreams of happiness around him. She comments Collins as "His reflections were in general satisfactory. Mr. Collins to be sure was neither sensible nor agreeable; his society was irksome and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband – Without thinking highly either of men or of

matrimony, marriage has always been her object; it was only an honorable provision for well-educated women of small fortune and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be then pleasantest preservatives from want" (140). Further she commits that "I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering in marriage state" (143). By rejoicing on the very status given she stands as a victor over the conformist society.

Whereas, she created other three characters Mary, Kitty and Georgiana highly over-shadowed by their sisters still they could register themselves in the list of Austen's mannerism. In fact, Mary is presented as a plain girl who in the company of her beautiful sisters feels the need to compensate by her extra accomplishment as reading and music- confirms the stereotype of the bookish woman, distancing the reader from any danger of identification. Meanwhile, the other three characters are made totally as opposite balance for the docileness and submissiveness-they are major character, Elizabeth Bennet, Miss Bingley and Lydia.

Lydia though not assign the major role but is the one who breaks out the convention and elope with Wickham, beyond the prediction of the society as far as woman nature is concerned. She is shown as lustful creature from the beginning of the novel and her extravagance toward marriage and male is distinctly displayed. She is shameless to express her affairs saying "Oh! Mamma do the people here about know I am married to-day? I was afraid they might not; and we overtook William Goulding in his curricle, so I was determined he should know it, and so I let down the side glass next to him, and took off my glove, and let my hand just rest upon the window frame, so that he might see the right and then I bowed and smile like any thing"(326).

She sometimes appears completely insensible also because rather than being the balm for her sister's sorrow, she mocks at her saying "Ah! Jane, I take your place your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman." She further says "and what do you think of my husband? Is not he a charming man? I am sure my sisters must all envy me. I only hope they may have half my good luck. They must all go to Brighton. That is the place to get husband" (326). This is Austen, who dared to criticize comparatively the follies of her own race, which could be seen in her strategy of creating both kinds of relationships on the same platform: one which is filled with jealousy and the other most affectionate relationship between Jane and Elizabeth side-by-side.

Further, Mrs. Bennet is shown as a middle class women craving for status. She sees every rich male as her son-in-law. She desires to come in the level of aristocratic society, making marriage of her daughter as her ladder. In this process, she is always ready to owe the rich guys by hook or crook either they are tolerable or not. Any thing that matters to her was the money, and her daughters are merely her cheque from which she could encash the money later. So, she was played by Austen comically. The initial dialogue of her itself give the actual position of her within her own family members when she says "You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves." In the response of her appeal Mr. Bennet replied "You mistake me, my dear. I have respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least"(21).

On the other hand, Elizabeth Bennet acts as a rebellious character; she is portrayed as a trainer of Darcy. The lady who is unworthy to even dance with Darcy ultimately became the better half is really a long story of evolution and refinement of Darcy. In the very beginning of the novel Darcy was asked to dance with Eliza but in

response he said "Which do you mean?" and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me;"(26). Having shown us the possibility for a more equal distribution of role characteristics, Austen also provides a setting where this new kind of couple can physically transcend the stereotyped conception of marriage upheld by their society. In the true sense Austen has assigned some of her characters with the power equal to the man. She has created them with exceptional talent against the hegemony which may perhaps become indigestible to her society.

Even, Leo Roy Smith points out that the hard truth about Austen's world is the fact of the male domination. Women, characteristically, are devalued . . . Their social status is narrowly and rigidly defined; passivity is their expected state. Any attempt by them to acquire or exercise power is viewed by men as "manipulative, disruptive, illegitimate, or unimportant." *But the female's craving for power is as deeply rooted as the males* (19). Leo Roy Smith finds that in Austen's fictions "some women, instead of acceding to dependency, it sustains their self-esteem by a compensatory striving for power that takes the form of imitation of the dominant male.

We can just observe the nature of Emma also, Emma firmly rejects the notion of passivity as her "expected state." She is created so bold characters that she has authority and power to reject the male also. She is laughingly dismissive of Harriet's wonder that, with all of her charming qualities, she should not be married, or going to be married!" (84) explaining that "My being charming, Harriet is not quite enough to induce me to marry; I must find other people charming – one other person at least. And I am not only, not going to be married, at present but have a very little intention of every marrying at all" (84). It is clear that Emma recognizes and relishes the power and autonomy of her somewhat anomalous position when she asserted that she has

“none of the usual inducements of women to marry” – that she would in fact, “ ‘be a fool to change such a situation as mine” (84).

Austen has placed Emma Woodhouse in the position of sexual dominance usually associated with men. What is more, she possesses a considerable degree of power, which is almost exclusively associated with male mastery. On the Emma’s words “Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband’s house, as I am of Hartsfield”(84); Mr. Knightley remarks approving that “ever since she was twelve, Emma has been mistress of the house and of you all” (37). Arguably, Emma wields a degree of power equivalent to that of the male characters within the novel; more, in some cases, as demonstrated by her rejection of Mr. Elton, and her proven ability to deprive Robert Martin of his choice of a wife. Our recent critic Korba also arises the issue of power asserting: Power comes with the label of the male gender (141). However, Emma is free to exercise her need to control as long she violates only the selfhood of the women with whom she conducts relationships, and not the social boundaries that circumscribe them.

Meanwhile, *Sense and Sensibility* also contributed as self-empowerment for the women with the same theme of acceptance and protest. Despite the leading characters who represent as a vice and virtue, other characters are also created interestingly such as Mrs. Jennings, Steele sisters. Every attribution of women was well pasted in some or the other characters and the women’s concern towards human values are highly shown. What could be better example of human relationship than Elinor's love towards her sister. Elinor giving consolation to her sister, Marianne, in spite of her own grief is really remarkable. Women in Austen’s novel are as the reservoir for human emotions which always remain neglected from the man's part.

While exploitation, seduction and superiority present inside man are harshly criticized by Austen. There might be many Elinor in Austen's mind to whom she was voicing for, because writings could not come out of nothing, a certain inspiration must have hit her head time and again. The society from the very beginning expects the women to have tolerance capacity even in the most disgraceful condition and this became the major burden for Austen to criticize.

As a counterbalance of the Elinor's nature, Marianne has been given full freedom to challenge the established conventions of the society. In those days every decision related to women are taken by the males but within the novel Marianne was given every rights to think about her life. Austen empowers Marianne enough to comment on the male. It is only she who criticized Edward Ferrars for being so unromantic, I mean to pass comment on the aristocratic lad by a poor lady was something unusual those days.

One of the comical characters which Austen portrays on her *Sense and Sensibility* is Mrs. Jennings who represents the entire circle of the aristocratic ideal women, who are more, concerned with others affairs than themselves. The circle that spend time criticizing others more than involving themselves in some creative works. Austen tagging her vulgar woman derogatorily praises her saying “. . . therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active as far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting weddings among all the people of her acquaintance. She was remarkably quick in the discovery of the attachments, and had enjoyed the advantages of raising the blushes and the vanity of many a young lady by insinuations of her power over such a young man;” (30).

Austen has created a wide variety of the characters but to assemble all in the

same platform is not a joke and she achieved her goal very brilliantly with the help of marriage as her location, criticism as her language and discourse of authority and all her flaw-ful and flawless women as her target. Every novels of Austen carries one of the most remarkable issues, "Marriage".

To start with, we can draws a perfect comparison between Rousseau's *Emile* and Austen's novels, Austen seems to be inspired with Rousseau, whereby taking his model of educating, Austen goes beyond the reversal of Rousseau model to a more complex and personal attribute towards sexual role-playing. By insisting that sexual characteristics are entirely natural rather than acquired, and by linking them to a code of moral behavior which differs for men and women, Rousseau essentially denies the possibilities for a equal role in relationship between men and women which is:

In what they (men and women) have in common, they are equal.

Where they differ, they are not comparable...In the union of the sexes each contributes to the common aim, but not in the same way. From this diversity arises the first assignable difference in the moral relation of the two sexes. One ought to be active and strong, the other passive and weak. One must be necessarily will and be able; it suffices that the other put up little resistance. (*Emile* 358)

He further writes

Thus, the whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet –these are the duties of women at all times, and they ought to be taught from childhood. (365)

Although Rousseau may allude to marriage in *Emile* in terms, which suggest a social contract, it is clear that the contract is based upon an unequal distribution of power [“Men depend on women because of their desires; women depend on men because of both their desires and their needs” (364)]. And while women are given the power to govern through influence over his heart, this power is indirect and always subject to male judgment and authority over her person. In fact, Sigmund Freud also later categorized human being into two categories, where Man is assembled with both ambitious and erotic desires and the Woman holding only one i.e. erotic desire making her inferior.

It is here, in what constitutes the respective demands attached to the male and female role and their basis in the natural law, that Austen’s adoption of Rousseau’s ideas warrants close scrutiny. What we learn in comparing *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* is how comparably Austen in later novel reverses attitude towards sexual education and embraces a view of the marriage relation which is more closely approximates the social contract with Rousseau proposed as a democratic political ideal rather than a sexual one.

Marriage remained her main concern because this is the better platform where she can offer a cluster of behaviorism of the women as marriage without the women is almost impossible practically and conventionally. These types of trivial things are thought to be the burden of the female where as per the male whole the outer world is there. Austen, in spite of depicting the outer business world, preferred marriage as a stage, and made the women perform there. She took the footage of the every neglected aspect of the women so as to make them aware to the world.

On the surface level, marriage remained the magnetic centre attracting all the characters around, but at the underlined level some clues focused on her aversion for

it. Well, this dilemma of her mind was well captured by Meenakshi Mukherjee, she put forward a question “Is Jane Austen accepting the convention or undercutting it through parodic strategies?” (36). The convention mentioned here is the convention of “Happy Ending” with marriage which is heavily weighed down in Jane Austen’s work with the burden of negative examples. To verify her ideas she forwarded many such places where Austen dropped her hints. Jane Austen’s treatment of marriage – undoubtedly her major theme – illustrated this tension vividly.

She is not unique in assigning centrality to marriage in her fiction. It has been a major and recurring concern of the English novel ever since it emerged as a distinct literary form. With the exception of Defoe and Sterne, all the major eighteenth century novelists tended to write about the web of human relationships out of which at least the central strand terminated in marriage, as event that could serve as a nodal point on which several areas of human experience converged. But when the central characters are women, this convention had a special significance first and secondly, out of eighteen distinct marriages appearing in *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, hardly one or two are rooted in love, others are shown as compromise for the sake of society like Marianne, for the sake of property like Charlotte, Willoughby etc, again frustration in marriage is also over-heightened through the characters like that of Mr. Bennet, Mr. Palmer etc. It is here, where we can deduce what actually marriage for Austen is. Still marriage became the powerhouse where Austen could exercise her proficiency by giving the speech to the speechless.

Unlike for men, who could make several choices in their lives and find their place in the society through individual enterprise, for women marriage was the only means of social mobility, one of the few areas in which they could exercise choice, and the only means –however illusory – of determining their own identity in a society

that denied them any effective autonomy. She distorts the idea of conventional marriage promoted by other writers like Rousseau who assign the burden of compromise only to the females – that the protagonist is bound to change for the sake to be suited to her lover. Rather, she made some of her characters so rebellious that they resembled Nora, heroine of Henrik Ibsen’s drama *A Doll’s House*, who dammed her husband and family for the sake of her own identity without which she is nothing in the world. Not only Nora, this is the story of every women of almost every age, first trapped under the responsibility of the father then the husband, she is no where in the world, there is identity crisis from which she can’t emerge out is.

Despite, that dominant norms in writing as well as practices, Austen gave full liberty to the women in the garden of their husband that’s why Georgiana got surprised on the reaction of her Brother Darcy’s activities towards Eliza Bennet, “Georgiana had a highest opinion in the world of Elizabeth; though at first she often listened with an astonishment bordering on alarm at her lively, sportive, manner of talking to her brother. He, who had always inspired in herself a respect which almost overcame her affection, she now saw the object of open pleasantry. Her mind received knowledge which had never before fallen in her way. By Elizabeth’s instructions she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband, which a brother will not always allow in a sister more than ten years younger than himself” (399).

Why not Georgiana should be surprised with changed attitude of Darcy, as she belongs to the very milieu which prefers molding of the female as per the male’s taste. Truly, women those days were brought up as a property of others always furnished with a variety of decorators so as to come to the eyes of the rich man and their only competition is for beauty, whose beauty is most worthy to owe the man. Charlotte

remained all the time ignored because of her lack of attractiveness thus accepted the proposal of the one who is not acceptable at all. For women with no heritage to fall back on, marriage was a desperate economic need, especially in a society that afforded very little opportunity or sanction for middle-class women to earn a living.

The paradox of real life, where those without private income needed marriage most urgently, and those with income were the most sought-after, also provided with the dynamics of the plot mechanism necessary in the fiction. The enactment of the ritual was complicated further by the fact that, while a woman's need to get marriage was much greater than a man's, the pretence had to be kept up that he was the pursuer and she the passive object of pursuit. All the strategies of art and artifice had to be deployed to sustain this myth. In such circumstance, could anything else rather than marriage could be the appropriate subject to exercise her politics of bringing the women at the centre? Perhaps, no!

Regardless of the created myth, Austen negates the concept of beauty as the decisive factor in marriage, because it is not the beauty which attracts Darcy towards Elizabeth. When she reached Bingley's house with weary ankles, dirty petticoat and dirty stocking, in order to see her ill sister she in spite of getting humiliation got appreciation from Darcy. When other members were criticizing on her looks, Darcy took support for her feelings towards Jane. His answer towards the question rose by Miss Bingley “. . . that this adventure has rather affected your admiration of her fine eyes" (51), was “Not at all," "they were brightened by the exercise" (51), totally in the favor of Elizabeth.

Marriage was certainly a crucial event in the lives of middle-class women, but the ending of each novel with an obligatory marriage was a stylized device to demarcate acceptable areas of fictional discourse. The continuation of these

boundaries perpetuated certain myths: for example, that marriage is the single event of significance in a woman's life and that nothing afterwards is of consequence, or that only nubile women can be interesting. Trapped in the especially male literary constructs of a patriarchal society, women novelists too began to accept these myths as truths universally acknowledged, and seemed implicitly to echo Fanny Burney's arrogant young lord in *Evelina* who says that she don't know what the devil a woman lives for after thirty. She is only in other folk's way.

Whatever may have been her fictional stand on marriage, one gleans from her letters her misgivings on the subject in real life. In one of her letter to her niece, Fanny in 1817 she wrote "Oh what a loss it will be when you are married. You are too agreeable in your single state, too agreeable as a niece: I shall hate you when your delicious play of mind is all settled down into conjugal and maternal affections" (Halperin, 280). Here, at this point anyone could deduce what actually is the value of marriage in Austen's life.

Her acerbity towards marriage can be seen in her portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet who sacked every established concept of beauty as an essential element for marriage and made her stand out as a self-sufficient person who doesn't need the man's attention to prove her worth to herself. Meenaskshi Mukherjee was right to doubt on Austen's frequent use of marriage as the ingredient, In fact marriage remained the barriers of many others writers too like Mary Shelley, Bronte etc when we go through their life history. It is even said that marriage is ones death for women and I find Austen believing on this saying.

In *Sense and Sensibility* the despicable John Dashwood, who is in no way interested in his sisters except as burdens to dispose of, begins calculating the money as soon as he sees Colonel Brandon:

. . . ‘What is the amount of his fortune?’

‘I believe about two thousand a year.’

. . . ‘Elinor, I wish, with all my heart, it were twice as much, for your sake.’

‘Indeed I believe you,’ replied Elinor; ‘but I am very sure that Colonel Brandon has not the smallest wish of marrying me.’

‘You are mistaken . . . A very little trouble on your side secures him. Perhaps just at present he may be undecided the smallest of your fortune may make him hang back . . . There can be no reason why you should not try for him” (195).

In nine cases out of ten a woman had better show more affection than she feels when she is secure of him, there will be leisure of falling in love as much as she chooses. The equation of money in men and beauty in women is obviously an axiom Jane Austen is exposing to criticism. Elinor was never shown so beautiful neither Jane nor Elizabeth, in fact as mentioned earlier, Elizabeth was first rejected first by Darcy for not being handsome enough to even dance also. And what to say about Emma, she was herself so rich that the males like Elton wants to secure their life by raising their status after getting married with Emma. This reversed role is what Austen used as a unique style of defense against the rigid authority.

And even how often a woman ‘yes’ in marriage was taken for granted can be seen in *Pride and Prejudice*, where Mr. Collins and Darcy, however dissimilar they might be as human beings, are equally surprised by Elizabeth’s rejection of their proposals. In *Sense and Sensibility* Elinor is amused at the way woman acquiescence is taken for granted:

‘We think now’, said Mr. Dashwood . . . ‘of Robert’s marrying Miss

Morton’.

Elinor, smiling at the grave and decisive importance of her brother’s tone calmly replied,

‘The lady, I suppose, has no choice in the affair.’

. . . ‘I only mean, that I suppose from your manner of speaking it must be all the same to Miss Morton whether she marry Edward or Robert.’

‘Certainly, there can be no difference; for Robert will now to all intents and purposes be considered as the eldest son; (259).

Every time, the patriarchy imposes its decision to the women without their real concern. We can see marriage appears merely a compromise for the ladies when Elinor said they have no choice in such affairs. But when Jane Austen highlighted the graveness of Elinor’s face on her brother’s words and made her speak on the helplessness of the women’s on their own affairs, there we could see a kind of emotional appeal of Austen for her women race. Similarly, Emma also reiterates this declaration of independence: “A woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked or he is attached to her” (48). Although they appear self-evident today, these assertions of woman’s right to chose needed to be made when her acquiescence was assumed.

In Jane Austen’s novels there is a constant tension between a woman’s need to exercise choice in order to define herself as an individual and society’s demand that she should conform. As a social institution marriage implied subservience and for the imaginative woman it did implied a curtailment. Accepting this as a part of God’s design, Richardson’s conduct-book heroine Pamela makes a maxim out of this situation in the final pages of the book:

In your maidens state think yourself above the gentlemen and they will

think you so too, and address you with reverence and respect . . . In your married state, which is a kind of state of humiliation for a lady, you must think yourself subordinate to your husband: for so it has pleased God to make the wife.

(Richardson qtd. in Mukherjee 42)

But still significantly all of the heroines marry men whose station in the life automatically involves them in inescapable and enduring ties to numerous individuals, as it affords them greater opportunity for self-expression and service to the others beyond the immediate domestic circle. Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Emma Woodhouse marry men with large state. Marriage is the only one tie among the many. And Austen can so confidently predict her heroines' happiness at the end of the novels because their happiness depends upon so much more than the character, disposition, or continued affection of their husbands.

Austen's ability of confining the women within the circle edge of marriage and households are themselves rebellious that it could arouse the marginalized feelings to the women. Remaining within the fringe of the women and her amateur art she very conveniently could show the societal treatment over them and the degree of the women to internalize or refute it. One of the central passages for understanding the role of amateur art and the problem of leisure in Emma's life is the response she gives to Harriet's questions about what would Emma do, how would she employ herself when old, if she doesn't marry, Emma's answers was: "If I know myself, Harriet, mine is an active, busy mind, with a great many independent resources, and I do not perceive why I should be more in want of employment at forty or fifty than one-and-twenty. Woman's usual occupations of eye and hand and mind will be as open to me

then, as they are now, or with no important variation. If I draw less, I shall read more, if I give up music, I shall take to carpet-work” (85).

Similarly, Jane Fairfax is opposite of Mrs. Elton. She is truly accomplished and truly modest although she doesn't boast about her resources and raptures; her superiority in accomplishments is universally acknowledged, even by Emma. With the dim prospect of becoming the governess in her future, Jane seems to have developed to the fullest her talent for playing and singing while acquiring the moral lesson as sound. Like Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Jane Fairfax has had, it seems, both the personal quality and the living environment that have enable her to make artistic performance a satisfying use of leisure.

But Emma's response to Harriet and the limitation for Jane's profession also suggests that a major part of the problem may be societal restrictions on women's activities, for few choices existed in Austen's world for women with an abundance of talent, intelligence, and energy. Emma's response reveals that performing the amateur art, such as drawing, music and carpet-work and reading literature are the main activities available to the women and suggests these do not provide adequate interest for some women of leisure with active, busy minds similar is the condition of Jane whose ultimate destiny despite of her talents is only governess. In his article “*Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition*,” Brown argues that Austen does not endorse marriage enthusiastically as “woman's sacrosanct destiny”, rather her consistent use of marriage to conclude her works of fiction “is primarily a literary convention which symbolizes the successful maturation of human relationships within each novel” (329).

If Elinor and Marianne Dashwood's serious commitment to self-improvement through artistic performance can be taken to reflect Austen's own commitment to

literary art, then perhaps Emma's inability to pursue amateur art with patience and industry can be taken to reflect the difficulty of sustaining such a pursuit in a society that does not recognize its worth. We are so easily moved by the romance of Emma we easily forget how close Jane Fairfax came to being sold in the governess trade, we forget how easily Harriet could have succumbed to flattery and temptation, and we forget how severely Emma's society restricts the development of her potential as a creative human being. This piercing truth is the thing which Jane Austen doesn't want us to forget. She with her minute play of words brings out all these issues so as to internalize and appeal for redrawing the boundary where every suppressed voice should be assembled.

3.2 Marginalization of Authoritative Voices

Although Austen's novels reflect an awareness of social injustice and sexual stereotyping, these are not of the same significance to Austen that they are to a late twentieth-century sensibility. It is not merely that Austen lacks our rather naïve faith in political machinery. More importantly, Austen's work is predicated on the conviction that for men as well as women the domestic circle of family, friends, and neighbors among whom one spends life's most private moments is of paramount importance. It is here that Austen would judge the success or failure of an individual life. The fantasy embodied in many female novels shows the well-heeled hero in his disinterested choice of a marriage partner embracing this "feminine" truth – that despite the other avenues open to him, domestic life and emotional bonds to parents, siblings, wife and child, and family intimates contribute more to happiness and fulfillment than success measured according to traditional male values.

Conventional wisdom tells us that a man who makes a disastrous marriage and finds himself unhappy in his personal life can escape the environs of the home in a way not possible for an unhappily married woman. Men may, after all, without retreat behind newspapers or bury themselves in business; become avid sportsmen like Willoughby and Sir John Middleton in *Sense and Sensibility* or, like Mr. Hurst, live only to eat, drink and play cards; or seclude themselves in the library like Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*. Certainly the ease with which men are able to escape domestic responsibility and avoid intimacy is fully dramatized in Austen's novels, but so is the price they pay for their emotional withdrawal, and Austen takes the moral measure of her character largely by the degree and the nature of their participation in this domestic world. Men are in this respect rather pitiable creatures, too prone to leading a partial existence.

Well, even Mrs. Bennet has a kind of integrity not possessed by Mr. Bennet whose sardonic stance rather than preserving his dignity only makes him a more ridiculous figure than many another sensible man with a silly wife. Mrs. Bennet can at least be said to be in earnest as she determinedly goes about what she considers the serious business of her life. This is the point to which Sarah Morrison remarks "In this moral universe, it is a feminine ethic that predominates and men rather women who are in greatest danger of remaining on the fringes of meaningful experience" (345).

Perhaps the truth is that men are not as important in the novels of Jane Austen as many critics would like to have them and that the function of the love story at the heart of each novel is roughly analogous to the function of the love story to be found in many a novel with a male protagonist – it is important as a sign or indicator and rounds out a comic conclusion, but not where the real story lies. The real story is the values of those human links that in some way appears so fragile but in reality remains indestructible.

Her novels never gave the hint of didacticism even then; she set a pattern for new form of writings. The form that guided the later writers to celebrate within their own limitations; that to acquire the equal position it's not always necessary to pull the other down from the acquired position but real concern should be how to lift the marginalized up? And this should be accepted that Austen is excellent in her skill. She made the women dance, talk, laugh, and party or performs every eccentric activity until and unless it hits the consciousness of the readers and marriage a social institution, is the arena for them to play. Just the opposite she becomes ignorant towards the feeling of the males; even if their presence carries the high values, she rejected them strongly that this became the symptom of sweet defense towards the strong enemy.

Although, she never gives her sharp criticism on her male characters nevertheless she creates them as licentious, corrupted, shameless, foppish, sarcastic and flat characters limpidly making them decline from their authoritative stance. Perhaps, these uncommon facets of the male were never been identified before and that inability of the contemporary writers also came under her eyes. Jane Austen novels are particularly striking for their refusal to erotize male superiority and completeness along with female inanity and to promote the cult of vulnerability.

First, I want to draw the attention on Austen's treatment of the male as a licentious character. When we go through her works; let's take *Sense and Sensibility*, there we can see Willoughby holding that position - he seduced most of the women of the novel, physically and mentally. He first seduced, impregnated and abandoned the 16 years old ward of Colonel Brandon. Then, the heroine Marianne was emotionally exploited, that she almost has to lose her life which results to the thorough change of her life and interests. Finally, Miss. Gray, who became merely a ladder to reach the property. Willoughby's crime was inexcusable; it is Austen's love towards the women that she warrants them from the possible danger from these male-type.

Similarly, Wickham's wickedness in *Pride and Prejudice* is shown through his betrayal to Elizabeth Bennet and seduction to Lydia whereby, Wickham first showed his consciousness toward Elizabeth at the beginning and took her to his confidant but in the later part of the novel he showed his treachery by eloping with her own sister, Lydia Bennet. Females of Austen have some flaws, but they are there for remedy and excuse, meanwhile males are shown morally corrupted and inexcusable. Emma was also given a full freedom throughout the novel then she finally learned from her mistakes and acted accordingly after. Even then she remained a sympathetic character whereas Willoughby was totally discarded by her beloved Marianne.

She even clearly criticizes the tendency of males using the females for their own benefits. In *Emma*, Mr. Elton doesn't accept Harriet's love because he wants to lift up his status by marrying a rich lady, Miss Hawkins and likewise Willoughby also ditched Marianne for money of Miss Grey. As the result of which, both the characters have to meet the same pitiful end when Austen punished them giving the partners distinctly remarkable as obnoxious, chatterbox and unbearable and their dialogues are so created that they give full entertainment with laughter at them.

Even more, males' self-centeredness and even their shamelessness are severely attacked by Austen. In both of her novel *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*, a man double of the heroine's age is shown in love with her whereby she distinctly made us aware of that injustice through the characters' speech. Austen doesn't end simply giving their comparative age but she makes her character to speak about it, which I think is not merely a coincidence but, her detest toward the tendency of society where money matters more than women. Where rich and aristocratic society has every right to acquire whatever they want without a faint concern to others feelings because both Mr. Knightley and Mr. Brandon are the richest one, in their respective novels.

From the story of *Sense and Sensibility* we are aware that Colonel Brandon was in love with Marianne, who clearly states him as of her mother's age so he is not her choice stating "Colonel Brandon is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be my father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long outlived every sensation of the kind". Though she dislikes Brandon but as per the tradition she has to surrender in front of the society and as a compensation Elinor was created as a character who accepted the hero Edward Ferrars, after all the controversies against him was over. Knightley in *Emma* also appears as the

companion of Mr. Woodhouse, Emma's father and the brother-in-law of Emma's elder sister at the beginning part of the novel. Also, he stands as the guardian to Emma every time whenever she does mistake. But only almost at the end he was declared as a secret lover of Emma.

Jane Austen has also decorated her novels with various fops who are openly ridiculed by her. Lets be introduced to those funny creatures dominating the novels – Frank Churchill though the major character of Emma is created as a fop who goes London leaving the party simply for hair cut - “Emma's very good opinion of Frank Churchill was a little shaken the following day, by hearing that he was gone off to London, merely to have his hair cut” (184). Similar was the nature of Willoughby, whose real concern was to owe the ladies by flirtation and spoil their life.

Among them Robert Ferrars was shown more comical that according to Elinor, has every capacity to give a long lecture in even small thing like toothpick case. Austen's witty dialogue for Elinor itself becomes a proof of her satire as we can see in some of the extract in *Sense and Sensibility*: “He address her with easy civility, and twisted his head into a bow which assured her as plainly as word could have done, that he was exactly the coxcomb . . . Happy had it been for her, if her regard for Edward had depended less on his own merit, than on the merit of his nearest relations!”(218). This man took Elinor's quarter of an hour vomiting all the rubbish that was somehow admired satirically by Austen saying “Elinor agreed to it all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition” (220). What a sharp and intelligent dialogue that it works as a criticism.

This foolishness of the males brings out the laughter to the readers. Again the issue of inheritance is also taken sarcastically. Mr. Collin is well pasted as a comical factor in the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Though five daughters and a wife are

dependent upon Mr. Bennet, his whole properties was declared to be owned by someone else after his death. Perhaps that was the custom of her society those days or maybe women are thought to be inferior in handling the property, so people those days might feel security of their property under males' arms. There lies the frustration of Jane Austen to which she is being critical of. So every time she brings the issue of inheritance of property simply to play fool on it.

The strong hands that got the fortune to hold Mr. Bennet's property in *Pride and Prejudice* is Mr. Collins who was shown so foolish and stupid that he appears as a clown of Shakespeare's drama. We laugh on his misdeeds. The most ridiculous and the most ill mannered character in the text, for not only does he lack the feeling appropriate to the rituals of human intercourses depicted by Austen, but he repeatedly adopts the wrong at both ends of the equation: his behavior arises out of consistently selfish preoccupations and manifest itself in mistaken utterances.

Collins's social missteps can do nothing but create barriers. A case in point in his letter of condolence to the Bennets after Lydia runs off with Wickham, which plainly derive not from a genuine sense of compassion for the beleaguered family but from a conviction for his own moral superiority and irreproachable social status – a position that would have been compromised that he had been married into the family. Indeed, his own augmented satisfaction. An even glaring example of Collins's embracing a form wholly inappropriate to the situation is, of course, his marriage proposal to Elizabeth. Under circumstances in which certain formlessness might be expected- is there a protocol for a declaration of affection? - Collins proceeds with all the earnestness of a school reciting an exercise in rhetoric: "My reasons for marrying are, first that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced

that it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly- which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I am honor of calling patroness.

To the very emotional part of proposing a lady, Austen created this man Mr. Collins so comically that the recent critics Ward, David Allen says “In fact it is possible to see in his proposal the seven parts, of classical oration (a form quite familiar to clergymen of Austen’s era). He tries to ingratiate himself with his reluctant listener (exordium), makes plain his subject matter (narration) and presents his thesis statement (proposition): Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. Having declared his argument he outlines its major parts (division) –“My reasons for marrying are, First Secondly Thirdly....” and presents his body of proof (confirmation), namely, that Lady Catherine de Bourgh thinks he should marry. And when he announces, “It remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood” (95), he is in effect addressing “opposite arguments” (refutation). His conclusion (peroration) is an emotional appeal with irony: And now nothing remains for me but to assure you of the violence of my affection” (95). Whatever feelings Collins has, one suspects at this point that violent affection is not among them” (19). Hence, this scene and the misguided letter of condolence to Mr. Bennet demonstrate that Collins lacking both the proper feelings and the proper forms is ill-equipped to function in a world of manner.

Mr. Collins is there in the novel to bear Austen’s hatred in the form laugh, just take another piece: “But the fact is that being as I am, to inherit this state after the death of your honoured father, (who however lives longer,) I could not satisfy myself without resolving to choose a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them

might be as little as possible; when the melancholy event takes place- which however as I have already said may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it would not sink me in your esteem” (124). By plunging this character in the novel and attributing every possible sarcastic characteristic, she discovered and displayed male-type also. Meanwhile, she attempted to prove the man having no better position than women. Here, I find her appealing an answer to a question that why man is considered to be higher in the position if both the sexes have equal flaw?

Likewise, Emma disliked the concept of relationship between Mr. Knightly and Miss Bates because she think that her niece would be deprived from Knightly’s property but at last she herself accepted his love ignoring what would happen if they have baby of their own. Generally, Jane Austen frequently raises these issues simply to thwart and laugh at the false practices prevailing on those days as far as the matter of inheritance of property is concerned.

Emma’s father who was always against the marriage of his daughter get convinced with a very trivial reason at last that whenever there is break-through of the thief into his house, his son-in-law will act as a hero. That was extremely fallacious premise from his side proving himself foolish, “Mrs. Weston’s poultry-house was robbed one night of all her turkies –evidently by the ingenuity of man. Other poultry-yards in the neighbourhood also suffered. - Pilfering was housebreaking to Mr. Woodlouse’s fear – He was very uneasy; but for the sense of his son-in-law’s protection, would have been under wretched alarm every night of his life. The strength, resolution, and presence of mind of Mr. Knightleys, commanded his fullest dependence” (440). In one hand male are shown mentally unconvincing, on the other hand they are made physically low. Although only a very small space were there in

her novel to share the male values, within that small horizon she attempted to cover the neglected parts, the one unable to uncover by her contemporaries.

Males are bound to suffer within the territory of Austen by being flat in their character. Mostly, they are found guided by the women authoritarian voice. In *Sense and Sensibility*, John Dashwood could not trample over his wife's words to give property to his sisters according to the wish of his father. We can observe his position and his helplessness; his passivity reducing his own thinking power and works out of his wife's mind. Fanny stands as the guiding storm for John Bennet. Though she appears as a negative character but she is the major part for the progress of the novel. She is the one who every time throws the challenge to the heroine and they get out of it more refined. It was Fanny whose ill nature compels the Mrs. Dashwood and her three sisters to go to Barton where they get intimated with various characters like Mrs. Jennings, Colonel Barton, Willoughby and many of the characters who helped in the novel's success. In compared to John, who ought to be the major villain of the novel, Fanny was assigned that role which leads to climax and denouncement of the novel.

In many ways the ongoing complaints that of these male figures are inadequately characterized or crudely utilized merely manifested a masculine resistance to Austen's marginalization of male experience, but even recent feminist criticism exhibits a tendency to overemphasize the role of the important male characters, often in a misguided attempt to assert Austen's historical relevance and profundity of her art. The emphasis of male emotion is largely unjustified, the heroes and villains who figure importantly in the plot are that much likely to appear too puny to support the thematic burden assigned them.

The villains, it has always being observed, are never allowed close enough to

the heroines to pose much of a threat. Katherine M. Rogers notes that “Both heroes or the heroines were flattened by the conventions appropriated to women’s novels (13) and goes on to observe that “In general, the female novelists do better with less important male characters, who can reflect keen social observation without being distorted by the fantasy requirements bearing on the hero and villain” (20). However true this may be as a general observation, it does not seem a satisfactory explanation for the comparatively scanty portrayal of Austen’s less-than-ideal lovers and not-so-threatening rakes.

Debates about the authorial stance in Jane Austen’s novels have often focused especially in *Emma*. The tension between Emma and Mr. Knightley and its final resolution inevitably raise questions about whether the author was upholding or challenging the contemporary moral or social attitudes. On the whole the charisma of Mr. Knightley and his apparent final triumph has persuaded critics that the novel rather supports traditional patriarchal values than otherwise. But there have been some attempts to unseat Mr. Knightley.

In 1968, J. F. Burrows questioned his authoritative function in the novel but stopped short of denying it altogether. “It is a matter,” he says, “of accepting him as a leading but not oracular participant . . . a matter of heeding his words but not bowing to them” (13). Burrows’s reassessment of the character of Knightley leaves us more as we were before, and in his analysis he doesn’t quite fulfill his promise to show us Emma in “an altered light” (13). Some feminist critics have been more thorough going, in particular Margaret Kirkham, who in an intelligent and searching analysis, has proved to her satisfaction that both Emma and Mr. Knightley have to change in order to be fit for each other, her purpose being to characterize the novel as a document in eighteenth-century Enlightenment feminism: “As the novel unfolds,” she

writes, “ the education of hero and heroine, about themselves and one another’s as moral equals, is shown in a way which subverts the stereotype in which the heroine is educated by the Hero Guardian” (133). This provide the alter light. Even, Laura Mooneyham, in a perceptive study that otherwise shows how Austen’s heroes are often educated by the heroines, rather than vice versa, says at the very beginning of her chapter on Emma: “Austen’s model for wisdom – and Emma – is Mr. Knightley” (107).

Those who sees Knightley in *Emma* as mentor, pure and simple, tend to overlook the enormous development his character undergoes during the course of the novel. At the beginning he is entirely the self confident paternal/fraternal guardian and pedagogue, inflexible in his concept of true womanly behavior, sure that he knows the best for everybody. Gradually his position is undermined, for in the long run experience teaches that his attitudes are too rigid that Emma institution are sometimes better than his “reasonable” assumptions and that love has little to do with the rules of conducts. While Mr. Knightley tried to escape from the patriarchal/fraternal role in the same way Emma also submitted herself in the conventional womanly manner. Thus, Mary Waldron opines that Emma and Mr. Knightley holds the possibility of becoming a balance of opposing but equal force, rather than the subjection of one personality to another’s. Perhaps this is what we are intended to understand by the novel’s closing words: “the perfect happiness of the union” (156).

And so it was with Jane Austen as person and novelists, to establish a connection between her art and classicism viewed as measure and balance is almost to belabor the obvious. Nor is it necessary to prove a direct relationship of study and influence. It is not enough to see Jane intuitively understood the rules, empirically approved of them, and habitually lived by them. In Jane Austen the person we see an

exemplification of the art of living is the act of living well: to live within life's limitations, to provide a proper place for both reason and sentiment, to have a rage for order, to practice the self effacement, to realize the saying truth that they may be light without heat, and to believe that the well-spring of good conduct is neither code nor class but conscience. We see in her attitude toward life an intelligent reaction to Romantic excesses. She was perfectly normal herself and was interested only in normality.

Thus she appears to be life concerned with life's surface and trivialities of human relationships; but there is no need to confuse surface with normality and the lacks of highs and lows with triviality. As R. W. Chapman puts it:

Before we infer Jane's narrowness from her silences, let us admit the possibility that she knew better than we can, how to get the results she aims at. The limits she imposed on herself were of her own choice (116).

It isn't that she sees disorder and would correct it, but that she wants a more perfect order. That order which balance both opposing impulses without being alienated from the very society, which remains her theme almost every time. Jane Austen disliked the "picture of perfection" in fictions which she declared made her "sick and wicked" (Halperin, 486-87) and this dislike of her challenge the authority. Perhaps it was this wickedness which made her invent characters whose surface perfection is belied by ordinary weakness and fallibility. She was there of course referring to heroines especially, but we may perhaps justifiably include heroes in this stricture. If Mr. Knightley is indeed the author's model for wisdom she must have departed from her usual practice, for nowhere in the major novels do we find a male character who is beyond reproach. Emma is no exception, and all the characters

including Mr. Knightley, behave in a muddled, unpredictable, and therefore “natural,” way.

Mrs. Elton in *Emma* is presented as an exaggerated and vulgar version of Mrs. Jennings. She is dishonest and probably been harmed by excessive praise of their (Mrs. Jennings) inferior performances. While she says that she “cannot do without music” and that her many resources make her quite independent of the society, she suggest to Emma that they establish a musical club with weekly meetings as an inducement to keep Mrs. Elton in practice (276-77), and the narrator tells us that “no invitation came amiss to her” (290) and she “only wanted to be going somewhere” (354).

Marvin Mudrick gives light on Austen’s view against the picture of perfection through Lydia’s behavior: the prominence given to Lydia in the fifty pages following Darcy’s letter is only too obvious a reflection of these s. Lydia has been called “highly sexed” by at least one critic, and Jane Austen has been praised for her refusal to sentimentalize Lydia strong “animal spirits” (100). But what characterize Lydia is not so much passion as it is a mere carelessness about herself and her reputation. Brought out into before her time and consequently without the kind of reserve or shyness which ought to characterizes girls of her age, Lydia has been loud and forward. But in the pages that follow Elizabeth’s return to Longbourn, Lydia indifference to the publicity is stressed with such a heavy hand – “we talked and laughed so loud, that anybody might had heard us ten miles off” (222) – that it seems surprising it has gone so long unnoticed. Male as a writer or male as a character, Austen comments both for their over confidence in creating the women’s character i.e. coyness all the time, which is completely out of reality, they could be obnoxious as Mrs. Elton and Mrs. Jennings or erotic like that of Lydia.

Likewise, we can find various samples of incomplete males in the form of escapist like that of Mr. Bennet, who was supposed to bear the burden of responsibility towards his daughters, seems running away from it and buried himself inside the books and newspapers. Even Mr. Palmer holds the similar position and both of them because of their frailty on the domestic affairs became marginal characters in their respective novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Austen satirizes on them and this satire stands as her perfect weapon which brings out laughter and from this laughter she playfully undermines the established convention and its rigidity. Satire was presented equally as the treatment for both male and female. Perhaps, laughter was appropriate weapon then, to cut the severity of the then society and secondly by mocking on the women race, she could evoke the essence of being human between them. So, she frequently let these authoritative notions to come out so as to trample on it.

“For whatever else it is, laughter is the greater equalizer in Jane Austen’s novels. And though it may vary in profundity from the vulgar fun of Lydia to the sociable playfulness of Elizabeth to the moral consciousness of Jane Austen herself, laughter is there as an eternal reminder that we are all part of one community, and not even the best of mean can be totally beyond the responsibility and the reproach of belonging to it” (622), James Sherry remarks.

Pride and Prejudice is also about women’s lives in relation to sexual roles and to marriage; therefore – that the connection is inevitable in Jane Austen’s point – it is about power, and independence and authority. The novel opens seductively, in the mode of the Johnsonian essayist: “It is universally . . . want of a wife.” On the face of it this sentence has an authoritative ring: as surely it is the pragmatic Jane Austen, which was famously and enigmatically praised by Virginia Woolf as “a woman’s

sentence.” Confronted by the sentences suited for men writers, Woolf declared, Austen “laughed at it and devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it” (825). The initiating philosophical-sounding premise of *Pride and Prejudice* is a good example. It laughs at authoritative sentence making. The first sentence and the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, integral, finished units in their different, equally forceful ways, mime so as subtly to mock the certainties of authoritative discourse; in the plot of the novel, such discourse become a theme.

Proud Darcy sets the action going when he scrutinize Elizabeth Bennet and pronounces her “Tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me (27)”, To the feminist critics, that Virginia Woolf described, in *A Room of One’s Own* as a shadow disfiguring male text: as Darcy goes on to declare his opinions on female accomplishments and related matters the egoism of the male authority is amusingly exposed. The action that devolves from his comment on Elizabeth Bennet proves his first judgment was false and the first step towards its own undoing. On the other side, Elizabeth mocks by repeating the line, telling the story on him among her friends “she had a lively, playful disposition,” the narrator explains “which delighted in any things ridiculous” (28). By talking so as to render him ridicules she is deliberately manipulating her own psyche, “he has a very satirical eye,” she tells Charlotte “and if I do not begin impertinent myself, I shall soon grow afraid of him” (34). In other words, by repeating his words to others she is talking for – in effect to – herself, choosing and using language not to express feeling but to create it, to make herself feel powerful.

When Elizabeth scrutinizes her feeling about Darcy, she acknowledges that it is she who has the power to provoke the words that will change her life; she respected,

she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare; and she only wanted to know how far she wished that welfare to depend upon herself, and how far it would be the happiness of both that she should employ the power which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on the renewal of his addresses. It is hard to decide and this, I think, is what must be borne in mind when we write about Jane Austen, whose authoritative irony eludes, even mocks our authoritative critical discourse.

Whereas slowly and gradually, Darcy, the person who was considered to be the picture of perfection rather we can say the authoritative figure, appears to the final step taking towards the involvement in the society, therefore, goes beyond the simple candor he learns when he begins to meet the people like the Gardiners halfway. It includes being actively engaged in a society where to be a responsible, feeling, and discriminating adult means at times the exposure to laughter. For Darcy this mean stepping down of the pedestal where his pride has kept him aloof in Grandisonian perfection and joining the mass of men who, as Elizabeth will teach him, are laughing and laughed at.

Both Darcys then will be instructed by Elizabeth happily ever after. In other words just as the marriage plot comes to triumphant closure it is neatly undercut: female bonding and women's laughter are elements of this novel's happy ending end. One woman will make a man the object of her pleasantries while another one listens and learns. This subtle subversion of the conventional romantic plot accords with the novel's attitude towards verbal tissues that appears to wrap things up once for all.

Like her heroines, Austen strongly questions authoritative discourse through dialogue. Dialogue, Mary Ellmann wrote, "might be defined as the prevention of monologue" (xii); as such it is a critique of patriarchal absolutism in prose. In her

Lady's voice, this combines an authoritative ring with flexible self-mocking undertones. Austen can comment with varying degrees of explicitness on the limits of rhetorical and human authority. Except for the ladies in domestic and literary circumstances (drawing rooms and fictions) circumscribed by the world of men, women have been denied such authority. Writing as a lady and considering the constraints that determine her persona, Austen reflected on the power of authoritative language.

Wayne Booth quoting the Katherine Mansfield's remark that "every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone – reading between the lines – has become the secret friend of their author" forwarded that – losing the connections of the words on the page, but avoiding Mansfield's "he" – that Austen readers has an illusion of travelling intimately with a hardy little band of readers whose head are screwed on tight and whose heart are in the right place" (266), in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. R. M. Brownstein added more that the illusion depends on the way the confident, confidential tones of A Lady are deployed so as to mock the accents of authoritative patriarchal discourse in the universe that contain her universe and fictions (62). Logically enough while portraying the authority figures and their discourses, Austen mocked the women's novel most for their moralizing.

Austen, although emerges as the fittest among her race still faced different problems for publication and if she got the publisher her name was cut off from her own writings even more she was paid much low only 110 pounds for *Pride and Prejudice* in 1812, much lesser than her contemporary writer, Sir Walter Scott who had been offered 1000 pounds for *Marmion* in 1808. That was the society under which we can imagine how could be the restrictions for the one who were meek. Society being orthodox is quite acceptable but the scholarly personality like Robert Southey advising Charlotte Bronte not to become a writer by warning her of two possible

dangers: excessive day dreaming – a precondition of writing – might induce a distemper, making her unfit for the normal female duties: and she might develop an unhealthy ambition of becoming a celebrity, and even admonishing her as ‘literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life and ought not to be’ was extremely ridiculous. In such hostile environment, Jane Austen strongly puts forward the representational voice of her women race with her agony spontaneously flowing out through her writings.

In fact, the readers of past or present got the true burden to know women in the real sense through Austen because she refused to enhance the aura of established male-myth anymore. Nevertheless, the women are depicted beforehand also, but totally yoked inside societal restrictions, helpless to revolt, thus recessive. And I believe being, human being, women are also attributed with every emotions and characteristics from which her contemporary writers could not escape. They became ignorance on those aspects of the women and only focused towards males keeping them as a measuring rod by which female emotions were measured. Ultimately, women are always found on the ground crawling, whereas male at the air, as remarked by Mantherland – A man soars high in the sky and a woman remains in the earth. Poor women always remain deprived of genuine criticism. Jane Austen collecting all those endured passions gave a representational biography including all her sisters’ races.

In that monotonous environment of highlighting the robust male, Austen appears to be a sharp critic against it. At the same time she unmasked the male too, bringing out the probable varieties of characteristics on them. She gave the readers to think in the other way; a new point of view to see the male rather than stick on the status quo. A man holds different status in the society, to which he is guided by different emotions accordingly; yet, these natural emotions were subdued in the

process of creating the male- myth of being explicitly supreme. Despite that so-called male myth, we come across the various mannerisms in Austen territory. In the novels the emphasis is insistently and unapologetically upon the personal rather than conventional.

Her art is feminine in its very assumption that personal relationships define one's being, and a traditional feminine vision of success informs her novels. Like the less equal punishment attending a man's adultery or fornication, the restrictions society places upon men are not as great as those under which women labor – and Austen everywhere implicitly recognizes this injustice – but her vision extends well beyond some feminist agenda that envisions a world of different proportions to instead offer a balanced view of life's inherent limitations and the modest possibilities afforded individuals whose lives are necessarily bound to others. Men, in fact are in this regard actually hampered by the illusion of freedom which their culture grants them. While acknowledging how many women novelists regard pain as the human condition, Patricia Meyer Specks nonetheless argues that a special kind of pain is to be found in novels by women that recount a young woman coming of age: “Lacking a sense of their free will, of full participation in the human franchise, they learn to know that their suffering derives from gender rather than from common humanity” (158).

This burden of consciousness carried by women inflicts its special torments, certainly precisely because this awareness is not shared by the economically and politically dominant male sex but it nonetheless affords – from the one perspective at least – a distinct advantage over the more limited vision of men. The very inequality of their condition, the constraints placed upon them, their dependence, and the actual condition of being female helps Austen's heroines to a realization that the “female condition” more nearly reflects the essential truth of the human condition. The idea may be anathema to many a modern-day feminist, but for Austen it was an enduring

moral truth.

What largely sets Austen apart from other women novelists is the conceptual ability to move beyond a preoccupation with male power and the technical skill to create the form her vision requires. Everything but the plot, it would seem, conspires to circumscribe carefully the roles of the male characters in Austen's novels. Austen would appear to be deliberately sinking the lover in the man. Significantly, the heroes in Austen's novels are not presented as the professed lovers of the heroines. Rather the heroine spends the better part of the novel observing the hero's conduct in his relations with others, very often as he pays court to another woman – as do Edward Ferrars.

Jane Austen felt the need of breaking away from the orthodoxy that never bothered the women, and made an atmosphere where feminine truths are highly admired. Mudrick's works *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* has the chief virtue of a narrowly conceived but highly intelligent critical enterprise— a cutting edge. Taking this notion, A Walton Litz opines “Although most readers today find it schematic and overstated, Mudrick's book brings into focus one important and undeniable aspect of Jane Austen's artistic personality. It remains a precise point of reference in the vague landscape of Jane Austen studies” (674).

Similarly, D.W Harding who developed the subversive theme in his extremely influential “Regulated Hatred: An Aspect of the Work of Jane Austen”, claims that Jane Austen is a literary classic of the society, which attitudes like hers held widely enough, would undermine. Definitely, Austen's values are precisely the opposite of those held by her admirers; her litotes subtly undermines the assumptions of the society she portrays. She emerges from this examination as the archetypal modern figure, isolated and self-protective, using her satire to preserve her personal, female integrity.

4. Conclusion: Women in Centre

Jane Austen, though the product of the same patriarchy tries to break away from the mainstream writings, and created her own style where she could accommodate the varieties of voice of women either passive or active. As the product of that authoritative world, both enduring and refuting urge were deep rooted on her, for which she gave outlet through the novels like *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice*. More than the female myth-creation, her real concern was to make them speak confidently in front of the world – that their voices whether relevant or irrelevant but must be heard by the people and come under genuine criticism.

For this purpose to achieve, she kept no mercy on the male and underrated their every emotion. She almost left no place for the males on her novel very occasionally whenever and wherever needed by her heroines. All the stage, which was being captured by the male, is now given to the female and the whole environment is created as per the taste of the female, where human values are highly respected far from the outer business world. And where the women could very assertively exercise their skills within their households, enjoying the feelings of their being in this world. She totally subverts the established concept of centrality and supremacy of male and his surroundings in the novels.

Jane herself within the grip of male-oriented society, could not make her characters totally defiant making them rootless. So, she very cunningly categorizes the women into two categories: both of which stands as a counterbalance to other. With this approach, she is intelligent enough to criticize the ill practices as well and to be in touch of that very society at the same time. On one hand she created meek and docile heroines as Elinor and Jane and on the other, she didn't remain behind to make the very violent characters as Elizabeth and Marianne on the same novels. Her comparison

between characters of two different impulses on the same novel definitely holds a very big intention targeted to the readers. So, she sometime being rebellious and sometime being enduring tries to win over the patriarchy.

From her balanced writings, we can deduce how impossible it was for the women writers to write absolutely enchained by the society. But still she could maintain the position of equilibrium with her device of comedy hidden behind wit and satire. Taking these tools as her shield, she criticized the drawbacks of the whole human race, nevertheless it point the males. She didn't bother much for the male still everyone whoever came on the way to her approach must come under her criticism. Though Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* and Robert Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* were kept under the criticism of Austen, but that was simply intended to show how men are also not complete in themselves. Yet, her major target was the fragile and forgotten female, that's why many of the female characters of her novels appear comical. Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Bennet were always being laughed at by Austen for their reform.

She basically did not accepted the prevailing authoritative ideal pictures also perhaps that's the real reason behind her creation of the location of her novel totally female-oriented, characters, according to the dominant ethics should be brave and robust, who dares to rescue the heroine and if villain, should have enough strength to take away the heroine but none of them hold those traits rather they are found dancing and partying parallel to the women in the novels. And if we talk about the heroines, they should possess the power of enduring, should be malleable as per the interest of her partners but on contrary, we find the heroes more flexible than the heroines and the heroines running counter to the most of the norms laid by the conduct books like that of Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet. Not a single formula of fiction gets fitted on her

novels. Not only the characters but all the setting, roles, values and concepts were undercut under the province of Austen.

If her novel is not directed to the male and her perspective is feminine than a question arises that “Does she want women’s power confined to the drawing rooms?” or Does she want to mock the image of the authoritative world which confines the limitation of the women only up to the drawing room? Definitely, by celebrating within the same societal and literary restricted area, Austen appears as a mild defiant against the orthodox society who dared to criticize the established norms and values that are exploiting the women, so as for proper re-adjustment of it.

Her frequent use of femino-centric environment as a theme gives a sharp answer to the trends which see no world outside the man and his so-called myth. The novelist who shows almost in every novel how important professional work in men’s lives, who shows the precarious economical status of unattached females, and who has characters to say that it is women’s fate rather than their merit that they live quietly, confined at home, where they do not forget men as soon as they are forgotten by them – this novelist creates an ambivalent response in some of the readers when she concludes every novel with a marriage.

Even though all the themes (marriage) are repeated, characters are very often stereotyped and their plots are commonly implausible in *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, but still they are both pleasurable and accurate, works “in which the greatest power of mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wits and humor are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. The emphasis falls on the chosen language. Choosing language, commenting on the stereotypes and the formulas of the recognized novelists, and the language available

for use in the social life, is always Jane Austen's subject.

A cluster of characteristic Austen values, come together here: an appreciation of telling the details; a pleasure in telling them, and in hearing tell; a clear sense of connection between saying and feeling, and social and emotional life; and seriousness about getting into print. Austen seems admiring women's novel that tells the stories of women struggling with her surroundings or about the ironic self-awareness of a rational creature absurdly caught in a lady's place. She wants her readers to feel every woman's aspects either admiringly or abusively.

More than simply a traditional love story her anxiety was a little higher which incorporate every single human relationship that is inevitable for ones life. Man being social being, always surrounded by the web of relationships and this relationship was thought to be the burden of the women only, so this part of life was long being ignored by the writers. That neglected part which comprises every kind of relationships: father- daughter relations that of Emma and Mr. Woodhouse or Eliza and Mr. Bennet, sister-sister like Elinor and Marianne or Eliza and Jane or mother-daughter relationship that of Elinor to Mrs. Dashwood or on the other side, though portrayed rude still sister-brother relationship that of John and two Dashwood sisters etc are specially brought up by her. In every case, presence of woman was must. Every types of relation were done justice by Austen. Not merely a relation between two lovers but rather a whole family package was brought up in the province of Austen which is absolutely wonderful.

Despite of sticking on the status quo, her inclination was towards the real world which comprises both bad and good aspect of life. That is why, Austen tried every measure to bring the frivolities out of the women creating some of her characters so funny, some so wicked, some lustful or some bold. She doesn't want her

characters totally isolated from the world of reality, that reality which is not perfect and accurate like that of mathematic calculations. By creating satirical portraits of women, she was able to criticize those who went along with the debilitating standards imposed on them by conduct writers and other proponents of female subordination. Similarly, highlighting the others weakness of human beings especially that of women, she wants them mirror themselves.

Austen's use of violent comedy as a form that dramatize the subjection of women (albeit adult, married, wealthy, middle-class women) who utilize their important time merely for unproductive and uncreative works. By inciting uncomfortable laughter, violent comedy enlists the readers in the process of reform. Staunchly, Austen politics of giving the mocking undertones in her novels opens up interesting possibilities for accounting for these uncomfortable scenes as both humorous and critical, whether one wishes to credit Austen with such a conscious didactic plan to force us to recognize our own complicity when we laugh at others' sufferings, or whether we locate this critical response rather in late-twentieth-century feminist consciousness. Connecting the resistance, rage, and self-empowerment embodied in these women's writings to strategies that we as twentieth-century readers and writers may also use, nevertheless, seems to offer more than it risks.

Overall, mocking undertones towards the authority as well as her own women race successfully unsettles a view of Austen as mere supporters of proper femininity, further suggesting that humor has been a traditional weapon in the feminist effort to challenge women's restricted roles. *Laughing Feminism* is a powerfully feminist work itself, not only in its adherence to feminist language, but in the careful attention it pays readerly responses to these works. Bilger persuasively represents reading these humorous moments in . . . and Austen subversively as an act of feminist solidarity

across the centuries” (196). Of course, this is the most powerful, sympathetic and appealing strategy for feminist teachers and their students to consider as they engage this important literary foremother.

Her own novels, with their ostentatious embrace and sly mockery of the tropes of fiction for women, depend on her readers’ familiarity with that fiction – on their having the thorough, easy knowledge of them that enables one to recognize social or literary conventions and to relish them. Austen presents herself as a daughter of the novelists who formed her own vision and her readers and continued to inform it. Condescending, mocking, competitive, this attitude is also defensively and devotedly filial.

Historically feminism embraces two conflicting impulses: the impulse to condemn the stereotypical and limiting roles for women, with the rather paradoxical goal of achieving full participation and equality for women on a male-dominated society’s terms; and the impulse to validate and elevate traditional women’s roles and concerns, placing these in opposition to entrenched patriarchal values. Elaine Showalter identifies two corresponding strains in feminist criticism. The first, which she terms the “feminist critique,” is “male-oriented,” focusing primarily on “stereotypes of the women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles women play in literary history. By contrast, what she terms “Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit the women between the lines of male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture (1227).

As a feminist Austen falls into the second camp. Her novels assert the primacy of the feminine experience by reducing the characterization of the men in the novels to their roles the private domestic circle and by confining their movement to restricted

social scenes as viewed from a distinctly feminine perspective. Men count first according to the impact they have upon the lives of their wives, daughters, sisters, lovers and casual female acquaintance: they are the potential husbands with uncertain disposition or habits dangerous to a wife's happiness, clumsy dance partners, unreliable guardians and protectors, charming companions, and incomes of so many thousand pounds a years. But male experience in so far as it is significant in the novels underscores the universality of the feminine truth the novels embody.

Showalter complains that the radical demand that would yoke women writers to feminist revolution and deny them the freedom to explore the new subjects would obviously not provide a healthy direction for the female tradition to take. But the denigration of the female experience, the insistence that women deal with 'the real business of the world,' is also destructive (1224 ff). Austen is so difficult to label because her art succeeds in presenting a truly feminine vision. Her novels are not directed at men: she does not envy them.

To sum up, from my view point, Jane Austen's policy was simply to appeal the world to feel the presence of women and their essence which was long being ignored by the female writers as well. She wants to undercut the concept of one race i.e. male being supreme to the other i.e. female, rather tries to convince the world that human being either male or female all possess both negative and positive aspects. All the flaws, follies and frivolities of the human race as a whole was mocked in the Austen's terrain, eagerly to show how the male holds no better position than that of the female. To thwart them from their occupied, exaggeratingly high position, that was long being offered by their own monopolistic society. So, she uses the strategies of reducing their voices, roles and environments that was totally against the limit of the prevalent norms and handed it to the women, which for it better part, automatically gives centrality to

the females.

Meanwhile, Austen gave the women the world to live in with full freedom and a mirror that could reflect their essence of being in this world, through her novels like *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Hence, her policy toward the readers distinctly appears as a plea for the true criticism that will make the women alive through these novels. Today, we cannot ignore the fact that the apparently placid texture of her novels conceals a tension between protest and acceptance, rebellion and conformity, held in equilibrium by the controlling device of comedy.

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