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Love and Marriage is Fundamental Problem of the Human life in Jane Austen's Novels: Pride and Prejudice and Sense and Sensibility

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Abstract

The Victorian Period begins with the traditions that have so many aspects in common. The period covered by the present chapter is that of the middle and later stages of the eighteenth century. Jane Austen's, the daughter of Hampshire clergyman was born at Steventon. She was an English novelist whose work of romantic fiction. Austen wrote as women about women. Her first novel was *Pride and Prejudice*. It is a set primarily in the country of Hertfordshire. The Bennet families are living a calm and quiet life in Longbourn. With the arrival of Mr. Bingley and his friend Mr. Darcy and later enter in the story a clergyman Mr. Collins and officer of Mr. Wickham. Mrs. Bennet finds herself surrounded by possible matches for her daughters. Mr. Bingley find himself attached to Jane while Darcy turns out to be the perfect husband for Elizabeth and Mr. Wickham, the villain of it, finally has to be settle for Lydia, the youngest of the girls. Elizabeth has an uncomplicated, funny and witty in nature; he is rather snobbish proud and reserved: Almost both of them meet and ends up the quarrel. She hates and teases him frankly. She realizes that Mr. Darcy, willing to forgive her. Finally got married and live happily ever after. The Second novel of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is about two sisters had different characters Marianne believed in *Sensibility* and eager in everything. On the other hand Elinor Professes had an excellent heart, mutual attachment has developed between Edward Ferras, the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood. Marianne happens to meet Willoughby, cousin, Mrs. Smith. Suddenly he leaves for London and Marianne takes the departure very sentimentally. At the time Lucy elopes with Robert. Thus hearing Edward free to Marry Elinor. Jane Austen's plots through fundamentally comic, highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. She considers love and marriage to be fundamental problem of the human life.

Keywords: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, plot, characters

Introduction

Novels in Victorian Times

Nearly all Victorians wrote copiously and had little regard for eighteenth century ideals of terseness and epigrammatic point. The novel replaced the poem as the most fashionable vehicle for the transmission of literature. This fundamental shift in popular taste has remained to the present day. Publications of serials in magazines and journals became more and more popular, and soon these pieces were being bound and sold in their complete forms. Until the Victorian period, the novel had been frowned upon as a lesser form of writing than the lyrics poetry. The novel appealed to a popular, often female readership, but critics dismissed it as artless and dull. However the later Victorian novelist and proved that the form could attain the heights of artistic achievement which was reserved only for the poetry. Thomas Hardy pushed the novel to its heights. The Victorian novels were idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hard work, perseverance, love and luck won at the end. Virtue was rewarded and wrongdoers were suitably punished. It was a principle that those who struggle to attain morality would most probably achieve positive results in the end.

Jane Austen's Novels

Jane Austen, the daughter of Hampshire clergy man was born at Staunton. She was an English novelist whose work of Romantic fiction, set among the landed gentry, earned her a place among the writers of English Literature. Her realism, biting irony and social

commentary have gained her historical importance among scholars and critics. She lived her entire life as part of a close unit family located on the lower fringes of the English landed gentry. She was educated primarily by her father and elder brothers as well as by her own reading. The eldest brother was critical of her development as professional writer. During this period she experimented with various literary forms, including the epistolary novel which she then abandoned. From 1811 to 1816, she published *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), (1814) and *Mansfield Park* (1816) and *Emma* (1816). She achieved success as a writer her novels *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, were published posthumously in 1818.

Jane Austen's Plots

Jane Austen's plots, though fundamentally comic, highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. Her works, though usually popular, were first published anonymously and brought her little personal fame. A Memory of Jane Austen introduced her to a wider public, and by the 1940's she had become widely accepted in academic circle as a great English writer. In 1793, Austen began and then abandoned, a short play, entitled *Sir Charles Grandson or the happy man*, a comedy in 6 acts, to which she returned and completed around 1800. Austen decided to write for profit to make stories her central effort. To become a professional writer she began to write longer, more sophisticated works. Her first novel was '*Pride and Prejudice*' (1796-1797 published 1813). The heroine is a girl of spirit, but she has no extraordinary qualities: her prejudice and the pride of rank and wealth are gently but pleasingly titillated, as if they are being subjected to an electric current of carefully selected intensity. *Sense and Sensibility* [1797-98, Published 1811] was her second novel, and it followed the same general lines as its predecessor. Jane Austen is the first modern novelist of England. She is one of the important women writers who wrote pure novels concentrating upon human beings and their natural relations. Love and marriage and matrimony are the basic themes of her novels. Austen wrote as women and about women. She was a practical idealist; she is preoccupied with the business of making matches of her heroines. Generally the heroines meet the right man and after a series of misunderstandings frustration occur to delay but never prevent their union. Morning, calls, dinner, parties, dances, shopping expeditions, weddings etc take place in her novels...In 19th century Jane Austin was a famous writer. She considers love marriage to be the fundamental problem of human life. She placed love larger than social contest. She stirred at love that failed to meet the demands of social life. She presents a very practical view of life and marriage in her novels. She occupies a foremost place among the English novelists.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen tells the readers about the heart – warming story of winning love of dreams and all the troubles that are connected with it. It is set primarily in the county of Hertfordshire. The Bennet family is living a calm and quiet life in Longbourn. But tempers are rising high when news enters the house that Mr. Bingley a young man of fortune, is going to become their neighbour. With the arrival of Mr. Bingley, his proud and mysterious friend Mr. Darcy clergyman Mr. Collins and officer of Mr. Wickham, Mr.

Bennet finds herself surrounded by possible matches for her daughters. With embarrassing simple-mindedness she tries her best to get those men's attention for her daughters. Mr. Bingley finds himself attached to Jane, while Mr. Darcy turns out to be the perfect husband for Elizabeth, and Mr. Wickham, the villain of the story, finally has to be settled for Lydia, the youngest of the girls. Mr. Collins, who is to inherit the estate of Bennet after the death of Mr. Bennet, sees it as his duty to propose to one of the Bennet girls. But after being rejected by Elizabeth, he finally turns his eyes on her good friend Charlotte Lucas, and marries her. Looking at Jane, it seems predictable that she is going to have the least trouble with her man, because Mr. Bingley immediately falls in love with her, and she too is very fond of him. Mr. Darcy gets the impression that his dear friend is only being liked for his money, and Jane is interested to be married to a wealthy man. For this reason, Jane remains heartbroken. But due to the intervention of Mr. Darcy, they finally get together. Almost each time Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth meet, things end up in quarrel and Elizabeth hates and teases him frankly. But her eyes open when Mr. Wickham, the former center of her admiration, turns out to be a liar, and she has admitted that she had done injustice to Mr. Darcy, who is willing to forgive her. They finally get married and live happily.

Sense and Sensibility – About Two Sisters

Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* is about two sisters. These two sisters have different characters. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood present the views of Jane Austen. Marianne believed in sensibility and was eager to know everything. Neither in her sorrows nor in her joys did she have any sense of moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent. Elinor, on the other hand, professed strength of understanding and coolness of judgment which qualified her. She had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong but she knows to govern them. The family of Dashwood had been settled in the country of Sussex. They had a large estate. Elinor discovers that Edward had been engaged to Lucy Steele, an ambitious and scheming young woman. Edward feels honored to Mary Lucy in view of the long standing engagement between them. Suddenly Willoughby leaves for London and Marianne takes the departure very sentimentally. At that time Mrs. Jennings invites the sister to her house in London. Marianne herself had believed that he would in due course marry her. Then everybody learns that Willoughby has married a rich heiress. Suddenly Lucy Steele elopes with Edward Ferrars younger brother of Robert, thus leaving Edward free to marry Elinor.

As an Expression of True Life

We admire Jane Austen for her influence bringing her novels back to their true place as an expression of human life. Principle theme of her novels is matrimony.

The Focus of This Paper

This present paper deals with the "Theme of love and marriage in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. It limits its scope to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. These two novels have the same theme of love and marriage.

The Theme of Love and Marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*

In the Nineteenth Century Jane Austen was one of the most

famous women writers and she takes love and marriage as the central theme for her novels. She considers love and marriage to be the fundamental problem of human life. After Shakespeare, she is the only writer to have taken a totally realistic view of love. She placed love in the larger social context. She sheered at love that failed to meet the demands of social life. Jane Austen's heroines are very sensible in love. No fictional heroine outside Jane Austen's novels thought more of her lover's intelligence than of her good looks. She presents a very practical view of life and marriage in her novels. She occupies a foremost place among the English novelists. Charlotte Bronte made the following comment on Jane Austen:

She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of gentle English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with the stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes, no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition- too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet. What sees keenly? Speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentiment target of death this Miss Austen ignores. (qtd. in Walt 127).

Context

Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice*, during the time when women were expected to stay at home, reproduce, bring up children, cook and clean. Women were also expected to sew, sing, dance, write, read and play musical instruments well. They were expected to just marry any man as long as they were safe and secure with money and comfortable home. Her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is written beautifully and realistically. It is so utterly controversial with the cultures of that time and therefore it has made a unique impression with the theme of love and marriage.

The Plot

Thus the plot of *Pride and Prejudices* is far from being grotesquely improbable.

Everything goes on by contraries yet all the ironies do not affect the probability of the story. Nor does the plot turn upon any strained or improbable incidents. The theme of love and marriage stands out as the biggest topic used throughout. Jane Austen was a practical idealist. She believed in an ordered and balanced life and considered a suitable marriage as the best way to it. Her conception of a happy marital relationship was loftier than that of the sentimental enthusiasts of her age. Marriage to Jane Austen meant perfect unions with one's spiritual counterpart with such happy results as self-knowledge, self-control and self-respect.

The Theme of Love and Marriage in *Sense and Sensibility*

Jane Austen was a realist who drew her materials from actual life as she saw it. Her stories are perfectly credible and convincing. She depicts the social life of her time and is thus practitioner of the domestic novel or the novel of manners. Realism is the keynote of her novels whether they are considered from the point of view of story, characters, or

selling. She considers love and marriage to be the fundamental problem of human life. Beatrice Kean Seymour says that Jane Austen's heroines "....had to fall in love and find their happiness not alone in marriage but in the best kind of marriage" (qtd. in Singh 40).

Emotional Treatment

The theme of love requires an emotional treatment of love in Austen's novels. Therefore, it is never an explosive passion. Jane Austen deliberately robs love of all its romantic glamour. She takes a very practical view of life. The principal theme of her novels is matrimony. She is the only writer to have taken a totally realistic view of love. Her novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion*, *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* deal with love and marriage.

Matrimony

The principal theme of her novels is matrimony. She is preoccupied with the business of making matches of her heroines. Her novels are all comedies in which she exposes the absurdities and failings of her characters. Her vision is ironical and satirical. However, her humour is not of the boisterous type: it is a mild and subdued kind of humour.

Sense and Sensibility: A Story of Two Sisters

Sense and Sensibility is chiefly the story of two sisters Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood, and their emotional involvement and the outcome of those involvements. The two sisters present a sharp contrast to each other so far as their temperaments and natures are concerned; and yet there is much common between them. Each of the sisters develops a love-affair with a young man who attracts them and who is attracted by them; and the love-affairs develop in more or less parallel manner, though the final outcome in each case is different. Although these two sisters are the main focus in the story, their lovers and a number of other characters too figure prominently in the novel, and add to its interest. At the very outset it would be useful for the reader to know that Elinor is intended by the novelist to embody her concept of "sense" and Marianne is intended by her to embody her concept of "sensitivity"; and it would also be useful to keep in mind the fact that there is some overlapping in these two concepts and that they are not altogether mutually exclusive. Elinor is not altogether without a certain degree of sensibility in her nature, while Marianne is not entirely devoid of sense. It would also be useful to remember that as the two sisters hold most of the reader's attention almost equally, they may be regarded as joint heroines of the novel particularly as there is much to admire in each.

Marianne

Marianne was highly romantic. She feels strongly and reacts warmly. Naturally she falls passionately in love with Willoughby. Soon her imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a sprained ankle was disregarded. Both of them were very romantically advanced in their love. When he returned the next day to inquire about her recovery, her smile was sweet and attractive and in her eyes, there was a life a spirit, an eagerness which could hardly be seen without delight. She offers a powerful defense of Sensibility.

Lucy

Lucy was now hoping to get married to Edward; and the thought of his marriage had been weighing upon Elinor's mind because she felt certain in her mind that Edward loved her and that he would never be happy with Lucy as his wife. Colonel Brandon continued to be in love with Marianne though Marianne was totally unresponsive to him even after learning the true facts of Willoughby's past life and his recent desertion of her.

Returning Home, Getting Married

Elinor and Marianne now decided to return home to Barton Cottage. On Mrs. Palmer's suggestion, they agreed to travel in her company by her own carriage as far as Cleveland where Palmers lived, and then to proceed to Barton Cottage by themselves. A day after their arrival at Cleveland, Marianne caught cold through her indiscretion and then fell ill with pneumonia. Her illness soon took a serious turn. Colonel Brandon undertook to bring Mrs. Dashwood from Barton Cottage to Cleveland by his own carriage so that he could see herself Marianne's critical condition. However, before Mrs. Dashwood arrived at Cleveland, Willoughby made his appearance there. Elinor was astonished to find him at that place, and simply failed to understand why he had come. He told her that he had come to know of Marianne's critical illness from Sir John Middleton in London, and that he had rushed to this place in order to apologize to her and to seek Marianne's forgiveness for his misconduct. He told her that he had never harboured any intention to marry Marianne and that he had formed a friendship with her only for the sake of the social pleasure which her company gave him. This was a strange explanation but Elinor accepted it because of the obvious sincerity behind Willoughby's desire for forgiveness. Willoughby then left, while Mrs. Dashwood arrived in Colonel Brandon's company. Elinor got married to Edward Ferrars at Barton church soon afterwards; and then they settled down at Delaford parsonage though they did spend a few days at Colonel Brandon's residence in Delaford as his guest before moving to the official residence of the parish clergyman. Mrs. Jennings began to visit Elinor and Edward. Now only one thing remained to complete the happiness of Mrs. Dashwood. She desperately wanted that Marianne should agree to marry Colonel Brandon who had been in love with her. Marianne had, expressed the view that Colonel Brandon, could marry only a woman of rheumatism. But the same Marianne now began to feel drawn towards him even though the difference between their ages was still eighteen years and though Colonel Brandon still wearing a flannel waistcoat most of the time. Eventually Marianne married Colonel Brandon, to the satisfaction and joy of everybody, except that of Willoughby who experienced a pang at the thought of Marianne married to Colonel Brandon. Mrs. Dashwood's third daughter, Margret, would acquire a lover and suitor for herself. Matrimony is the leading theme of this novel. Mrs. Henry Dashwood wants her daughter to be married happily. She feels very happy to perceive a growing attachment between Elinor and Edward Ferrars, and she begins to feel confident that the two would get married soon. Similarly, she begins to hope for a marriage between Marianne and Willoughby soon after Willoughby has first met Marianne and has subsequently become a daily visitor of Barton Cottage. The Elinor – Edward and Willoughby – Marianne affair, followed eventually by Elinor's marriage to Edward and Marianne's

marriage to colonel Brandon, which constitute the two major stories of this novel. This is certainly a realistic aspect of the novel because most mothers in those days in England, and everywhere are preoccupied with the matrimonial future of their daughters. The modern mother has her own hobbies, amusements and pleasures, and she leaves her daughter free to find her own husband if she can.

Fanny's Attitude and Argument

Thus the readers are given a true and realistic picture of the way in which women generally behaved towards the relatives of their husbands. The opening chapters of this novel describe the conduct of Mrs. Fanny Dashwood towards her husband's stepmother and step- sisters. Fanny's attitude towards these relatives of her husband is characterized by coldness, selfishness and narrow – mindedness. John Dashwood would like to make a gift of some money to his step-mother and step-sisters; but Fanny argues the matter with him in such a shrewd way.

Mrs. Jennings, Sir John Middleton and Others

Mrs. Jennings and Sir John Middleton, give us a notion that apart from engagements and marriages, there are other occupations of the people. She is talkative to the point of silliness. Robert Ferrars is another example for shallow mindedness. His mother is also a silly woman, though she shows in quiet a different way. Willoughby's expressiveness and dissipation are the result of the irresponsibility of his yearly youth. There is nothing fanciful about the portrayal of Willoughby though his conduct towards woman cannot be regarded as the warmth of the conduct of the youth of the times. *Sense and Sensibility* is not wholly a realistic novel. It is not a realistic novel through and through. It has a large component of romance in it. Marianne's love affair with Willoughby is a romantic affair. It reads life as a fairy tale. Colonel Brandon's love affair with Eliza Williams and Willoughby's seduction of Eliza William, followed by a duel between Willoughby and Colonel Brandon, belong undoubtedly to the domain of romance. When she comes to know of Edward's engagement with Lucy, she is not shattered like Marianne. Her love is guided by mind and not by heart alone. Ultimately she is united in a happy marriage with Edward Ferrars. Jane Austen proves that romantic love is dangerous to our happiness. She believes in love which results in happy marriage.

Sensible in Love

Jane Austen avoided actual sense between lovers. Her heroines are very sensible in love. They always regarded marriage as an essential process of education and improvement for the lovers. The readers find that Jane Austen presents a very practical view of love and marriage in her novels. This practical attitude of Jane Austen has misled some critics to believe that she has approved of mercenary marriages without love. They are of the view that she has considered human relationships to rest entirely on money.

Exposition of the Economic Basis of Social Behaviour

Jane Austen's novels, according to critics, offer an honest exposition of the economic basis of social behaviour. Writing in the same context, a critic says

Critics have remarked that there is no real delineation of true love in Jane Austen, and that is true enough, for Miss Austen knew only too well that in that kind of society genteel young

ladies cannot afford true love: their objective must be marriage, and marriage with someone eligible. In Jane Austen, only the poor can afford passion. All this is obviously an evidence of Jane Austen's common-sense. It would be wrong to interpret it in any other way. Jane Austen with her keen observation of life must have realized that it was not possible for all to marry only for love. She knew that sensible, unromantic marriages held out better prospects of happiness. (qtd. in Walt 129).

Condemning Marriages of Pure Convenience

Jane Austen of course, condemns marriages of pure convenience, but at the same time she also admits that sometimes it may become absolutely necessary for a girl in love with one person to accept another for whom she can at best feel only a certain liking. Jane Austen believed that there is no wound of life which cannot be healed. She never considered love and marriage to be an exclusively personal affair. Marriage was a social institution and love and marriage, therefore, were to be considered in the larger social context. Thus Jane Austen took a very practical view of love and marriage. She approved only of love that resulted in the best kind of marriage. As her characters possess common sense and have a practical attitude towards life, they are never disappointed in their love. Their love always results in prudent and successful marriage. Above all Jane Austen believed in the stability of life. A stable and integrated life is the basis of real happiness and peace. This stability of life depends completely upon the stability of society.

Artistic Treatment

Jane Austen was very particular about the material she took up for artistic treatment in her novels. She had a very strict sense of form, and knew that the compact form of the novel depended mostly upon the nature of theme. She restricted her range of social portrayal of three or four. Families in a village and within this narrow range she was meticulously selective. She was interested principally in the essentials of human relationships that provided a theme for her novels and it was between man and woman. Jane Austen dealt with the problem of love and marriage in all her novels and excluded everything else. The readers find her deeply concerned with the problem of proper adjustment between man and woman. She restricted herself almost exclusively to the English country gentry. Even within narrow social orbit her attention was focused only on a few families. If there are characters representing other classes, they are always on the periphery and do not have any serious impact on her theme. Even her mood in all the novels is uniformly comic. This uniformly comic vision also imparts a sense of unity to her theme. David Cecil aptly writes:

A Writer of Comedy

Jane Austen was a comedy writer. Her first literary impulse was humorous; and to the end of her life humour was an integral part of her creative process; as her starts to function, a smile begins to spread itself across her features. And the smile is the signature on the finished work. It is the angle of her satiric vision, the light of her with that gives its peculiar glitter and proportion to her picture of the work (qtd. in Lascelles 101).

Love and Passion

In Jane Austen's novels, love is neither a terrible thing nor a very deep passion. It is just a necessity of life at a certain

age. Passion is unknown to Jane Austen and persons do not fall in love at first sight. Austen does not deal with the illicit love. Jane Austen could approve only a sensible husband to a sensible wife and foolish one to the foolish. In the novel *Pride and Prejudice* Mrs. Bennet gets what she deserves, Mr. Collins chooses a companion unlike himself, while Jane and Elizabeth select persons agreeable and suitable to their temperament and personality. Both Jane and Bingley are of good nature and so deserve to be each other's partners. Elizabeth and Darcy form another pair of lovers whose nature is more or less similar. Both are remarkably intelligent. Elizabeth becomes unduly prejudiced against Darcy, partly because of his pride and the false presentation of his character by Wickham. But at the story progresses, Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy and his pride against Elizabeth are removed, and eventually they are married. In their case, Jane Austen approves of the marriage of good persons of similar nature and temperament.

Heart under the Control of Head

In the world of Jane Austen, heart must be controlled by head; feelings must be subordinated to reason. Elizabeth is fascinated by the sweet manners and charming personality of Wickham. But on the sound advice of her aunt Mrs. Gardiner, she controls her feelings. Lydia has neither sense nor character to put a check on her feelings. She elopes with Wickham at the first opportunity, bringing disgrace on herself and her family. The real object of marriage according to Jane Austen is not home and house-keeping, parish and poultry, but something higher. It is companionship, and intellectual and emotional association between husband and wife, and she would not approve of a marriage where such an association is wanting. She had little sympathy for romantic imprudence or credulous good nature. She was impatient of people with hearts of gold and heads of woods. And though she was not a slave to worldly considerations. It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it. Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood are shown pursuing their private lives according to their individual outlook and belief. The fate in each case is an unhappy love-story, but this provides us with parallel plots which are demonstrations of the dual thesis. Character and theme are firmly presented in the opening chapters, Marianne was generous, amiable, interesting, she was everything but prudent. Elinor on the other hand, possessed strength of understanding and a coolness of judgment. She had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate and her feelings were strong but she knows how to govern them. At the death of her father she shows her control over her feelings while her mother and sister give themselves up to an excess of sensibility.

Irony, Humour and Surprise and Abundance of Characters

Jane Austen's use of irony, humour and surprise moments in the chosen two novels are remarkable. Her novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* contain a number of interesting incidents and situations to arouse the reader's interest. Jane Austen gives us an abundance of characters in her novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. She is not only concerned with sketching the externals of characters, but also with the psychological portrayal of characters. Thus Jane Austen has skillfully and subtly handled the theme of love and marriage in the two novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

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