



## Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as a Timeless Dramatic Classical Novel

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is treated as a timeless dramatic classical novel. It was first published anonymously in three volumes in 1813. Jane Austen seldom describes characters, but instead she uses the art of dramatic presentation. The characters reveal themselves through what they say. The story involved a previous marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet which was based on physical attraction which soon faded. It included the marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy, the marriage of Jane and Bingley, the marriage of Lydia and Wickham and the marriage of Collins and Charlotte Lucas.

The relationships and actions related to the characters in the novel are portrayed through the themes of marriage, prejudice, pride, morality, social class and reputation.

**Keywords:** Timeless, dramatic, romantic, classic, presentation, genius, manor, desperate.

## Introduction:

*Pride and Prejudice* is actually the greatest romantic novel of English Language. More than two hundred years after her death, her novel continues to resonate with every new generation. *Pride and Prejudice* was published anonymously in three volumes in 1813. It is a classic of English literature which was written with an intensive wit and superb character portrayal. Upon publication, *Pride and Prejudice* was well received by critics and readers. The first edition sold out within the first year, and it never went out of print.

Jane Austen seldom describes characters, but instead of description which is the traditional resource of novelists, she uses the art of dramatic presentation. Instead of telling the reader what her characters are, or what they think or feel, she presents the characters and they reveal themselves through what they say. In this art, she has never been surpassed, not even by Shakespeare. Jane Austen's genius is entirely dramatic, and so little descriptive. She relies upon what her characters say and do.

To remind or inform the reader, a brief summary of the novel can be as follows:

A wealthy young gentleman named Charles Bingley rented the manor of Netherfield Park. His arrival causes a great stir in the nearby village of Longbourn especially in the Bennet household. The family has five unmarried daughters, named Elizabeth, Jane, Mary, Kitty and Lydia. Mrs. Bennet is desperate to see them all married. After attending a ball, Mr. Bingley is taken with Jane. His friend Mr. Darcy haughtily refuses to dance with Elizabeth and is described as arrogant and obnoxious. Later on, Mr. Darcy finds himself attracted to Elizabeth. Jane's friendship with Bingley continues to burgeon. Miss Bingley, Charles' Bingley sister is against the relation and her spite increases when she notices that Darcy whom she is pursuing, pays an attention to Elizabeth. Mr. Collins is a young clergyman who is supposed to inherit Mr. Bennet's entailed property. He makes a proposal of marriage to Elizabeth, but she turns him down. Collins marries Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas who accepts him for financial reasons. The Bennet girls are friendly with militia officers in a nearby

town. Among them is Wickham who is friendly toward Elizabeth. He tells Elizabeth that Darcy cheated him out of an inheritance. One day, Darcy makes a proposal of marriage which Elizabeth refuses. She tells Darcy that she considers him arrogant and unpleasant and scolds him for steering Bingley away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham. Shortly thereafter, Darcy sends her a letter telling her that he urged Bingley to distance from Jane and claims he did so only because he thought their romance was not serious. As for Wickham, he tells her that he is a liar and that the cause of their disagreement is that Wickham tried to elope with his sister Georgiana Darcy. The letter changed Elisabeth's feeling about Darcy positively. Lydia elopes with Wickham and the couple is nowhere to be found which means they may be living together out of wedlock. Later they are found and Wickham agrees to marry Lydia in exchange for annual income. The Bennetts learn that the source of money, and the family's salvation was Darcy. The story ended in the marriage of Jane and Bingley and also the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

To discuss the impact of pride and prejudice on the relationships between people including love and marriage.

### **Research Objectives:**

- 1-To portray the central theme of love and marriage in the novel.
- 2-To show the impact of prejudice on the relationships between people.
- 3-To discuss social class as the target of the novel's criticism of society.
- 4-To show the negative effect of pride on relationships between people.
- 5-To show how love and happiness can overcome class boundaries and prejudices.
- 6-To issue the primary moral lesson about pride and prejudice which is not to be prideful or judgmental toward others.

### Research Questions:

- 1-What kind of novel is *Pride and Prejudice*?
- 2-How are the ideas of love and marriage presented by Jane Austen through the novel?
- 3-What is the significance of social class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how does it influence the relationships?
- 4-Can love and happiness overcome class boundaries and prejudices?
- 5-What is meant by Jane Austen's style of dramatic presentation?

### Literature Review:

A lot has been written about Jane Austen's works. Critics on Jane Austen has been written since 1813, about four years before her death in 1817. The criticism continued up to 1939 which can be considered as contemporary and old criticism. Modern criticism took place from 1940 up to now. The published literature about Jane Austen's works is available in print including her letters. Adequate and current information is available in the Internet.

### Research Methodology:

The research about Jane Austen's works can be done through what reputed critics have written since 1813 up to now, which is available in print. As the novels of Jane Austen are generally considered timeless classics, the Internet provides the reader and the researcher with adequate relevant information.

### Characterization:

In Jane Austen's dramatic novels, there is a portrayal of round and fool characters. Her fools are referred to as a class of characters in delineating in which she caught the knack of Shakespeare. The fool simple is easily exhausted, but when a collection of ideas are grafted upon him, he becomes a theme for many variations. An



example of this is Mrs. Bennet. She is presented as 'a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper'. This definition stands for the fool's negative. Positive qualities are also added to the definition: 'When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news'.

Another fool is Mr. Collins, somewhat of a caricature, and therefore easier to analyze. He is a man of mean understanding, and a bore to boot; that he steams himself worthy to be always occupying a place in the notice of those whom he associates, and he thinks it incumbent upon him always elaborately to explain his motives and his reasons. At the same time, he has some sense of the necessity of humility, and lays claim to this virtue by always speaking of himself and his belongings as 'humble', and by the most expensive display of humility towards his patrons, and towards any one of a rank above his own. To his own personal claims, he adds the official claim derived from his being a rector in the church of England, which gives him occasion to obtrude his own advice, always wrong, in various vicissitudes of the tale. The contrast between his empty head and heart and his fixed ideas constitutes the diversion of the portrait. He is perfect when he exhorts a father to forgive his erring daughter like a Christian, and never to speak to her again. (J. E. Austen Leigh, 1870)

### **Character and Action in the Dramatic Novel:**

In all its forms, the dramatic novel need not be tragic, and the first novelist who practiced it with consummate in England- Jane Austen- consistently avoided and probably incapable of sounding the tragic note. The instance may seem strange, but it is only so in appearance. There is in her novels, in first place, a confirmation to one circle, one complex of life, producing naturally an intensification of action; and this intensification is one of the essential attributes of the dramatic novel. In the second place, character is to her no longer a thing merely to delight in. It has consequences, and it influences events, and it creates difficulties and later in different circumstances

dissolves them. When Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy meet first, the complexion of their next encounter is immediately determined. The action is set going by changing tension between them and by a few acts of interventions on the part of the other figures, and the balance of all the forces within the novel creates and molds the plot. There is no external framework, no merely mechanical plot; all is characters and all at the same time is action. One figure in the pure comedic sense in the novel is Mr. Collins. He has no great effect on the action; he is an end, not a means and an end at the same time. He remains unchanged throughout the story. There are other pure comedic elements; for example, the permanent domestic tension between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet.

The plot of *Pride and Prejudice* differs from the plot of a novel of action in its strict interior causation. The first aversion of Elizabeth to Darcy was inevitable because of the circumstances in which they met. Darcy was proud of his social position and Elizabeth was encumbered by her unpresentable family, and because they were people of such decided character that they were certain to dislike each other at the beginning. Elizabeth is true to the candor of her mind in believing Darcy to be cold, haughty and vindictive. She is equally true to it later in acknowledging that she is mistaken, and in changing her opinion. The action in this case is created by characters who remain true to themselves. It is their constancy which sets the events moving and they gradually manifest themselves.

## Themes:

### 1-The Moral Realistic View of Life:

Jane Austen satirizes in relation to a global standard of values. Her novels express a general view of life. It is the view of the eighteenth century's civilization. Jane Austen was profoundly moral. The idea is based on the idea one lives only to be good, and that it is the first duty of everyone to be sincere, unselfish and disinterested. According to this conviction, she thinks it imperative to see life realistically. The good notions should be acted upon and they should pass the test of common sense and

experience. She was not interested in ideals that were not practical. All emotions should make for the benefit and happiness of mankind.

## 2-Marriage:

The ideas of love and marriage are presented in different ways by Jane Austen throughout the novel. The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet was brought about by an initial physical attraction that soon faded.

Elizabeth' goal is marriage for love not wealth. The novel is a love story, but it also includes the inequality that governs the relationships between men. The theme of love and marriage is central to the novel and much of the narrative is concerned with it. Through the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth and the marriage of Bingley and Jane, Austen shows the power of love and happiness to overcome class boundaries and prejudices.

## 3-Prejudice:

Prejudice is one of the main themes of the novel. It is one of the obstacles that got in the way of Elizabeth and Darcy from marrying quickly. Mr. Darcy's prejudice toward Elizabeth is mainly because of her social standing. He didn't notice the strength of her character for a long time since he was above her in class. When he was able to disregard their social differences, he fell in love with her. Social prejudice can cause negative results in society.

## 4-Pride:

Pride is a constant presence in the characters' attitudes and treatment of each other. It affects their judgements and leads them to make rash mistakes. Through the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth and the marriage of Bigly and Jane, the power of love and happiness overcame class boundaries and prejudices.

### 5-Moral Lesson:

The primary moral lesson of *Pride and Prejudice* is not to be prideful or judgmental towards others. One should not make hasty judgements based on appearance and first impression.

### 6-Social Class:

Austen highlights the importance of social class in her time and how it influences the relationships. Class issues are available every where in the novel, whereas the novel never posits an egalitarian ideology nor supports the levelling of all social classes. Class is the target of much of the novel's criticism of society in general.

### 7-Reputation:

In Jane Austen's era reputation was considered very important. Women were expected to adhere to certain rules and exhibit positive behavior in the public sphere. The Bennet girls did not adhere to these values. An example of this is Lydia Bennet, who ran away with Wickham and lived with him out of wedlock. Her behavior endangered the reputation of her family and the future of her sisters. But the relation between her and Wickham was at last set right by legal acceptable marriage.

### Unity of Time in the Novel:

Jane Austen's stories cohere so nearly. She seems always to have kept in mind a distinct period of time over which she described her incidents. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the period is from autumn to the next.

### Conclusion:

To sum up, *Pride and Prejudice* is a timeless novel which is read today as it was read in the past. The themes treated in the novel are in harmony with the lives of people today.

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