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Human Relations in Jane Austen's novel Pride and Prejudice

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Abstract

This research study aims to highlight and discuss Human Relations in Jane Austen's novel Pride and Prejudice, in which she has selected the basic unit of human relationship, the family. In the family, there are several forms of relationships among them, the most fundamental relationship is in terms of love and marriage, which formthe basic theme of the novel Pride and Prejudice and the theme of human relations.

Through closely reading the novel, the present study will analyse and discuss parents' and children's relations, friends' relations, and other minor relations. To discuss parents' and children's relations, the focus will be on the relationship between Mr. Bennet, the father and Elizabeth, the daughter. From a vantage point of view, the daughter reviews the relationship between her father and mother as husband and wife in terms of their love and marriage. She finds it damaging to the family and rejects it. Steering clear of them, she treads over her own path. In other words, she doesn't accept her parents as role–models.

What is true, socially, and artistically, about the relationship between parents and daughters also holds about the relationship between friends. It has also been discussed and analyzed in this research study. Charlotte Lucas has a realist's idea of marriage. Elizabeth has an idealist's idea of marriage. It is suggested that the ideal becomes perfect only when it accommodates the real.

There are a few other minor relations developed around the characters of Wickham and the Gardiners. They play an active role in further clarifying and reinforcing Elizabeth's vision of marriage with affection.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The present study, Human Relations in Jane Austen's novel Pride and Prejudice, is concerned with the study and analysis of human relations in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The present study is divided into three main sections along with an introduction and a conclusion. The first section will discuss parent and children's relations, and the second will deal with friends' relations, whereas the third section will be on the other minor relations mentioned by Jane Austen in her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice*.

Many critics have argued that Jane Austen stands apart from her contemporaries, and her craftsmanship lies in creating a sense of human relations. John Hardy argues that Jane

Austen's greatness lies in her exploration of human relationships through the subtle and original portrayal of her heroines. He added that Austen's recognition of this represents her special insight[s] into what is of central importance in human relationships. Brown also states clearly that Jane Austen, in her novels, has successfully matured human relationships. Morgan quotes Mary Chandler's words that Austen [in her novels] "fuses the physical with the emotional and the intellectual to create a sense of total human relationships." So, in comparing Austen to other novelists, she is highly creative, and intellectual in creating a sense of total human relationships in her novels, and that is unequivocal in her masterpiece *Pride and Prejudice*.

1.2. Parents and Children Relations

From the major human relationship involving love and marriage between the major characters in the novel, readers can come to another important relationship, human relationships among characters in the novel.[1] Minor human relationships take on the form of the most primary family relationships in their various forms, among which the relationship between the parents, especially the father and the daughter, assumes a significance of its own. When we come to the relationship between the father, Mr. Bennet, and the daughter Elizabeth, in the novel, we find a total change in Austen's attitude, approach and treatment of this theme in that the relationship between the father and the daughter is not one that we usually find in atraditional patriarchal family nor the one which we find in the contemporary novels of the century. It is a peculiar relationship in which the daughter, standing at a vantage point, reviews the relationship between the father and the mother as a husband and a wife regarding their love and marriage. The review is done with the specific purpose of knowing the nature and conditions of their love and marriage and their impact on the course of their own lives as well as on the lives of their daughters. As a novelist, Jane Austen is very much concerned with the unhindered mobility of the social institution of marriage. That requires the elimination of any aberration that, in the time, must have crept into this organism of the social institution of marriage. So, it becomes necessary that the Present look into the immediate Past to find out itsweak points which affect the Present, its course of events and, most effectively and adversely, propel the mind and character of its people – both men and women. If those weak points are not traced and eliminated, the organism of the institution of marriage might get sore in some parts, which may further affect its Future course and growth. Austen wants this to never happen

[1] -Taking the cue from Barbra Hardy's book " A Reading of Jane Austen " (1975: 103) I have developed, on my own, the ideas of other minor relationships which have an impact on the major relationship –what are these? and how do they put their impact? In chapter 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4.

There Hardy has to say this – "her sharp and profound insight into social structures, relationships and roles creates a series of Critical Scenes."

so that the institution of marriage grows continuously as a healthy organ from the Past into the Present and, ultimately, into the Future.

So, the daughter–Elizabeth–is made, by the novelist, to review the lives of her parents. On two counts, this analysis of the married life of the father by daughter is essential for Elizabeth. First, it helps her understand the institution of marriage itself – what it is, what it was and what it should be. Second, this understanding helps her apply correctives to her wrong thoughts and doings regarding the institution of marriage. It is not that Elizabeth is all correct. She has the conceit of being all-knowing and all-judging. The novelist is not comfortable with this attitude of her heroine. So, some incidents show her mistake and make her correct herself. This way, every simple incident, event, or accident, however minor, taking place in the novel reinforces the main theme of love and marriage and the main course they take in the novels. So, such an event or accident should not be taken as something isolated or apart. It is like a tributary replenishing the main current.

The family has been the earliest bone of contention and a source of depreciation and dislike between Elizabeth and Darcy. Darcy apart, Elizabeth herself did not feel very comfortable in the company of the members of her family–her father, mother, and her sister; chapter 18 of the novel is fully devoted to them. It is here that each one reveals themselves. Much more important is the way in which he/she presents himself/herself before the gathering whose attention they want to capture. That shows what grain each one is made of. It is not the picture of a cultured, well-mannered, disciplined family. It is the picture of an undisciplined crowd where people jostle together with ill-tempered tongues and bad manners. To Elizabeth, her mother is the most undisciplined and ill-mannered person –

> " Her mother's thoughts, she plainly saw, were bent the same way, and she determined not to venture near her, lest she might hear too much. When they sat down to supper, therefore, she considered it a most unlucky perverseness which placed them within one of each other; and deeply was she vexed to find that her mother was talking to that one person (Lady Lucas) freely openly and of nothing else but of her expectation that Jane would be soon married to Mr Bingley."[2]

Again – "In vain did Elizabeth endeavour to check the rapidity of her mother's words, or persuade her to describe her felicity in a less audible whisper; for to her inexpressible vexation, she could perceive that the chief of

[2] . Austen , J. *Pride and Prejudice* , p.79 ;chapter 18.

it was overheard by Mr Darcy, who sat opposite to them. Her mother only scolded her for being nonsensical .”[3]

She goes on darting her barbs at Darcy, not at all mindful of the fact that Darcy is sitting at a hearing distance; she is so impertinent and uncultured –

"What is Mr Darcy to me, pray, that I should be afraid of him? I am sure we owe him no such particular civility as to be obliged to say nothing he may not like to hear." [4]

This impertinence is accompanied by unreasonableness and a lack of practical sense. Realising the weakness of her character and mind, she is advised by Elizabeth –

"For heaven's sake, madam, speak lower. – what advantage can it be to you to offend Mr. Darcy? -you will never recommend yourself to his friend by so doing."[5]

But she is so importunate that she will not listen to the commonsense advice –

"Nothing that she could say, however, had any influence. Her mother would talk of her views in the same intelligible tone. Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shamed and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she dreaded; though he was not always looking at her mother, she was convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by her. The expression of his face changed gradually from indignant contempt to a composed and steady gravity."[6]

So, she would continue her prattle, come what may and irrespective of the fact of who thinks what. That is her notion of" etiquette" –

"It was necessary to make this circumstance a matter of pleasure because on such occasions, it is the etiquette, but no one was less likely than Mrs. Bennet to find comfort in staying at home at any period of her life."[7]

This is Elizabeth's perception of her mother – a character who cannot be made to see sense even by Elizabeth. The perception is purely objective and real, for she is being perceived in a real situation. Elizabeth has no prejudice against her mother, who is certainly prejudiced against her. And that is a point of a quarrel between Mr Bennet and Mrs. Bennet –

'" You are over–scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls, though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.'

'I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half as good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference." [8]

Mrs. Bennet needs correctives, but she seems determined not to be corrected by Elizabeth, who is so low in her esteem. This only reveals the complex from which she suffers, and which comes

[3] . Ibid.p.79; chapter 18.
[4] . Ibid.p.79; chapter 18.
[5] . Ibid.p.79; chapter 18.
[6] . Ibid.p.80; chapter 18.
[7] . Ibid.p.79; chapter 18.
[8] . Ibid. p.2; chapter 1.

in between the mother and the daughter so that she is not overtly willing to accept Elizabeth's superiority, but she accepts it with her tongue in check. Not being intelligent, she is not willing to accept its presence in anyone, Elizabeth included. And so " Elizabeth was in agonies." [9]

"Agonies" is the proper word to describe the relationship between the mother and the daughter. In such a situation, Elizabeth seems to be totally resigned –

> "To Elizabeth, it appeared, that had her family made an agreement to expose themselves as much as they could during the evening, it would have been impossible for them to play their parts with more spirit or finer success; and happy did she think it for Bingley and her sister that some of the exhibition had escaped his notice, and that his feelings were not of a sort to be much distressed by the folly which he must have witnessed. That his two sisters and Mr. Darcy, however, should have such an opportunity of ridiculing her relations was bad enough, and she could not determine whether the silent contempt of the gentleman, or the insolent smiles of the ladies, were more intolerable." [10]

Like the sinking man catching at a straw, she catches at her father to save the situation. But Mr. Bennet is as hopeless and tactless. This is so because Mr. Bennet is also of the same party; he is no different from the other members of her family – "Mr. Bennet, in equal silence, was enjoying the scene." [11]

So, finally –"… and Elizabeth, sorry for her, and sorry for her father's speech, was afraid her anxiety had done no good." [12]

Agony again creeps in this relationship because of the foolhardy insistence of Mrs. Bennet that Elizabeth must marry Mr. Collins –

> "Of having another daughter married to Mr. Collins she thought with equal certainty, and with considerable, though not equal, pleasure. Elizabeth was the least dear to her of all her children; and though the man and the match were quite good enough for her, the worth of each was eclipsed by Mr. Bingley and Netherfield."[13]

Knowing full well that Elizabeth is not agreeable and that –"She is a very headstrong, foolish girl, and does not know her own interest", [14] Mrs. Bennet insists upon her accepting him; she even threatens her –

[9] . Ibid. p.80; chapter 18.
[10] . Ibid. p.81; chapter 18.
[11] . Ibid. p.82; chapter 18.
[12] . Ibid. p.80; chapter 18.
[13] . Ibid. p.83; chapter 18.
[14] . Ibid. p.88; chapter 20.

> "An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. – Your mother will never see you again if you do not marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you do." [15]

The comic threat of the father is also there. However, Elizabeth steers her own way–"Elizabeth could not but smile at such a conclusion of such a beginning;" [16]

There is a clear suggestion, on the part of the author, that the younger generation must clear of the old ways of the old generation with a smile (of course, an ironic smile) on their lips –"… and Elizabeth sometimes with real earnestness and sometimes with playful gaiety replied to her attacks. Though her manner varied, her determination never did." [17] In matters of social relationship and love and marriage, the young generation has a choice to make – perish with the old generation or flourish with one's own "determination". And in walking over one's own course of life, there is no need of being disrespectful to the old generation. There is no possibility of old women like Mrs. Bennet changing or adapting herself to the new situation. The old generation is like the exhausted spark; let it burn till it dies its own death; only it should not be allowed to burn the green pasture round. This is the attitude of Elizabeth in her relationship with her mother –"Her daughters listened in silence to this effusion, sensible that any attempt to reason with or soothe her would only increase the irritation."[18]

So, her attitude to her mother is not at all aggressive. It is one of reverence mixed with pity and solicitude. However, at heart, she wants that, being the mother of a large Bennet family, she should, herself, live and behave as the honest mother capable, both intellectually and spiritually, to lead her herd in the right direction and present a good, cohesive, and intelligent picture of her family. There the mother fails. She does not behave like the senior most and serious head of the clan; she becomes one of these youthful girls who, in the words of their father," are all silly and ignorant, like other girls;" [19]

Mr. Bennet knows her very well –

> "I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party.'"[20]

[15] . Ibid. p.89; chapter 20.
[16] . Ibid. p.89; chapter 20.
[17] . Ibid. p.89; chapter 20.
[18] . Ibid. p.90; chapter 20.
[19] . Ibid. p.4; chapter 1.
[20] . Ibid. p.4; chapter 1.

That is the level of her mind and understanding.

So, in Elizabeth's mind there is a big gap between the mother as she is and the mother as she should be. There is no way to fill this gap. The ideal mother is beyond her reach. The real mother is weak and corrosive. So, Elizabeth must be protective and go on moving on her course of life without looking back and taking the mother to be a symbol of stasis and anachronism of her world.

Mrs. Bennet has the laudable ambition of getting her daughters married advantageously. But this intention, though good in itself, leads only to the humiliation of Elizabeth and Jane on a number of occasions. We find Mrs. Bennet boasting of her daughter's talents and attempting awkward contrivances or ridiculous maneuvers in her efforts to find husbands for them. We feel that if Jane and Elizabeth were not unlike their mother in every way, except in their good looks, they would never have succeeded in finding husbands. The novelist suggests that the mother's love for her children is mostly instinctive. Children, however, after a certain age begin to hunger for a lot more than the instinctive love of the mother and the mother's failure to meet their demand causes disappointment. Austen felt that a mother, who is foolish, vain and injudicious, can't be a cherished and respected friend of her children, nor a prudent and reliable adviser.

The case is no better with the father. Though Mr. Bennet is intelligent and has the gift of penetration, he fails to exercise his authority as the head of the family. Not once in the whole course of the novel do we find him exerting his power to the advantage of his children. He makes no effort to save Lydia from the ruin which is to be the inevitable outcome of her romantic infatuation for Wickham and consequent elopement. Elizabeth visualizes the situation and appeals to the commonsense of her father. But he fails to respond to her entreaties positively. He talks to her as a cynic and wants the event to take its own course without ever realizing what the consequence would be for the family and for Lydia. He rather misunderstands her and feels as if she is being selfish. A long dialogue ensues between the father and the daughter –

> " In vain did Elizabeth attempt to make her reasonable, and Jane, to make her resigned .As for Elizabeth herself, this invitation was so far from exciting in her the same feelings as in her mother and Lydia, that she considered it as the death-warrant of all possibility of commonsense for the latter; and detestable as such a step must make her were it known, she could not help secretly advising her father not to let her go .She represented him all the improprieties of Lydia's general behaviour, the little advantage she could derive from the friendship of such a woman as Mr. Forster,…"[21]

[21] . Ibid. p179; chapter 41.

Again –" 'If you were aware ', said Elizabeth, ' of the very great disadvantage to us all, which must arise from the public notice of Lydia's unguarded and imprudent manner; nay, which has already arisen from it, I am sure you would judge differently in the affair.'

> 'Already arisen?' repeated Mr. Bennet.' What, has she frightened away some of your lovers? poor little lizzy! But do not be cast down. Such squeamish youths as cannot bear to be connected with a little absurdity are not worth a regret. Come, let me see the list of pitiful fellows who have been kept aloof by Lydia's folly. '" [22]

Mr. Bennet does not take Elizabeth seriously enough. Elizabeth understands it; she talks about it more plainly –

> '" Excuse me, - for I must speak plainly. If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed, …'" [23]

Elizabeth's fear comes to be true. It gives support to Darcy's dislike of her connections. But the event has richer significance than this; it provides a test of Mr. Bennet's character as a father. And Mr. Bennet, with his satirical view of human folly, his irresponsible detachment from it, is shown to be morally very defective. Elizabeth, trying to comfort him when Lydia's affairs are at their worst, begs him not to be to serve upon himself: –

> "… he replied,' say nothing of that. Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it. '
>
> 'You must not be too severe upon yourself ', replied Elizabeth.
>
> 'You may well warn me against such an evil. Human nature is so prone to fall into it! No, Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame. I am not afraid of being overpowered by the impression. It will pass away soon enough. '" [24]

And it does pass away. At least, Mr. Bennet soon resumes his characteristic tone, his ironic detachment, and his tendency to enjoy his own cleverness at the expense of others. His remarks about Wickham as a son-in-law are heavily ironic; yet he does enjoy him, as he enjoys Mr. Collins, precisely because he can see through them.

The moral exposure of Mr. Bennet is a further examination of the vices that Elizabeth, to a less culpable degree, has shared. For she is quite as much the product of her father's influence as Darcy is of his. It is from her father that she derives the tendency that is in her to misanthropy, before her information begins this misanthropy is partly through a wrong

[22] . Ibid. p.179; chapter 41.
[23] . Ibid. p.179; chapter 41.
[24] . Ibid. pp.229-30; chapter 48.

upbringing. And the wrong upbringing is due to a bad family where the relationships of all sorts are at a discount, where the parents do not understand their daughters and cynically fail to show them their ways in life. This is because they themselves have never been able to see their own ways of life because of their failed marriage. Here is the significant comment of the author –

> "Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father, captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her respect, esteem, and confidence had vanished forever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. But Mr. Bennet was not of a disposition to seek comfort for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on, in any of those pleasures which too often console the unfortunate for their folly or their vice. He was fond of the country and of books; and from these tastes had arisen his principal enjoyments. To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will drive benefit from such as are given." [25]

The Past is incapable of showing any light to the Present. Hence the Present must steer its own course of life. The failure of the parents to secure a happy married life where love is paramount, mutual understanding is supreme and mutual confidence is strong has made Elizabeth more determined to secure all these things in her own love and marriage. The parents, thus, are a moral lesson to her. It comes to her when she, with her open mind, reviews the married life of her parents. Thus, the story of the failed family life of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet clears her vision about her own wished-for life where marriage is grounded on pure life. Thus, minor theme reinforces the major theme.

Elizabeth's caution and extreme fastidiousness on the question of marriage originates from her acute sense of the inequalities, perpetually before her eyes, of her parent's marriage. She resembles her father in her lively wit and her appreciation of the ridiculous. They are good friends, almost confederates as Mrs. Bennet has occasion to complain. But for all his wit, Mr. Bennet's view of life is empty and cynical. He can contribute nothing to Elizabeth's moral education beyond the example of an experience to be avoided. Having been cheated by life of married happiness and self-respect, he derives a malicious delight from seeing other people similarly hurt and humiliated. He is a foil for his idealistic, high-principled daughter, providing in his casual dismissal of the responsibilities of marriage and parental care an unconscious spur to her determination to act and think differently. Unlike Elizabeth, who revolts inwardly against her mother's free display of weak judgment and low standards of behaviour, Mr. Bennet can

[25] . Ibid. p.188; chapter 42.

observe his wife with amused detachment. His cynical indifference is shaken, but not destroyed, by Lydia's elopement with Wickham. He realises that his daughter's weakness is the direct result of his wife's indulgence and his own irresponsibility, yet Mr. Bennet's impulse towards regret and self-blame will, as he says himself, "pass away soon enough". It is worth noting that the most deeply moving moment in the novel occurs not between Elizabeth and her father. Roused from his selfish lethargy for the first time by genuine concern for another person, Mr. Bennet urges his favourite daughter to refuse Darcy's proposal –

> "But let me advise you to think better of it. I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about. '" [26]

Elizabeth has often been allowed access to her father's thoughts, understands his prejudices and his habits of mind, even enjoys his confidence – up to a point. Here, at last, the barriers between parent and child are down, and Elizabeth is permitted to see, in all its desolate waste, the barrenness of her father's life.

So, the presentation of the relationship between the parents and daughter – Elizabeth – is, in fact, an in-depth illustration and exploration of the major theme of love and marriage which states that mutual respect and affection constitute the best and safest basis for marriage. The parents are always under the critical gaze of Elizabeth, who relishes her role as a "studier of character." The parents represent the sloughs of despond and the detectable mountains she may meet in her own progress towards the ideal marriage relationship. The analysis of the relationship between parents and daughter thus helps to define Elizabeth's personality whose depth and breadth of wisdom and broad understanding are revealed in these lines –

> "Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband .She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. But she had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which, rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife." [27]

[26] . Ibid. p.291; chapter 59.
[27] . Ibid. pp.183-84; chapter 42

These lines testify Elizabeth's clarity of vision in her understanding of the spoiled relationship between the husband and the wife and the consequent spoiling of their family and the family relationships subsisting among the members of the family. Marriage that damages the family must be rejected. The husband who is selfish and irresponsible cannot be the ideal. The wife who is not understanding and sympathetic is not acceptable. The father who is least concerned about the welfare of his daughter is not to be taken seriously. The mother who behaves irresponsibly is not worth being a mother. This is what Elizabeth comes to feel and know from her relationship with her parents. There is thus no way out for her than to steer clear of them and tread over her own path. So this relationship of the parents and daughter encourages Elizabeth to be independent. And independence is her prime attribute which the novelist has tried to explore and expose in the novel.

1.3. Friends Relations

What is true, socially, and artistically, about the relationship between parents and daughter also holds true about the relationship between the friends. In the novel Elizabeth has one and only one friend – Charlotte Lucas whose marriage to Collins is brought under the critical gaze of Elizabeth. This critical gaze is as much directed on Charlotte and her marriage as on her own mind. Since marriage short of love is not at all acceptable to her, she reacts sharply and negatively to Charlotte's willing acceptance of marriage with Collins –

> "The possibility of Mr. Collins's fancying himself in love with her friend had once occurred to Elizabeth within the last day or two; but that Charlotte could encourage him, seemed almost as far from possibility as that she could encourage him herself, and her astonishment was consequently so great as to overcome at first the bounds of decorum, and she could not help crying out:' Engaged to Mr. Collins! my dear Charlotte, - impossible !' " [28]

So, this dislike of Charlotte's willingness once again gives her an opportunity to assert, positively and forcefully, her own view about the "marriage of true affection "[29]. Elizabeth's conversations with Charlotte Lucas on the subject of marriage reveal her finer moral fiber. Despite Charlotte's good sense, and the fact that the reader sympathises with her situation, her action in accepting Mr. Collins reveals the coarse insensivity that lay unperceived all the while beneath her practical, witty and non–romantic approach to life –

> "' I see what you are feeling ', replied Charlotte, – ' You must be surprised, very much surprised, – so lately Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. 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

[28] . Ibid. pp. 99–100; chapter 22.
[29] . Ibid. p. 79; chapter 18.

> convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state. ' " [30]

This simple, innocent, straightforward and confident assertion of the fact on the part of Charlotte puts Elizabeth in an "awkward"[31] situation – a helpless situation where she cannot do anything either to stop this marriage or to help her friend out of her predicament. She is forced to "reflect" [32]on it; she finds no alternative but to reconcile herself to it for the sake of her friend – "It was a long time before she became at all reconciled to the idea of so unsuitable a match." [33] Her difficulty is due to the fact that her own friend could be allured by "worldly advantage"[34] and that she "sacrificed every better feeling." [35]It is really unbelievable for Elizabeth –

> "The strangeness of Mr. Collins's making two offers of marriage within three days was nothing in comparison of his being now accepted. She had always felt that Charlotte's opinion of matrimony was not exactly like her own, but she could not have supposed it possible that, when called into action, she would have sacrificed every better feeling to worldly advantage. Charlotte the wife of Mr. Collins, was a most humiliating picture! And to the pang of a friend disgracing herself and sunk in her esteem, was added the distressing conviction that it was impossible for that friend to be tolerably happy in the lot she had chosen."[36]

Her emphasis is on the phrase 'a friend'–and that is the cause of here ' pang '; it amounts to a betrayal of friendship, of faith and conviction. Here is her explanation of her disillusionment with a friend like Charlotte –

> "' There are few people whom I really love, and still fewer of whom I think well. The more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it; and every day confirms my belief of the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense. I have met with two instances lately; one I will not mention; the other is Charlotte's marriage. It is unaccountable! in every view it is unaccountable! ' " [37]

Her pang and disillusionment are due to her failure to account for this fall of her friend. She had put her correct ' dependence ' on ' the appearance of either merit or sense ' of Charlotte. She does not seem to have erred on that count. Then where did she err in putting her complete faith and trust in the friendship of Charlotte? She, as it were, feels utterly betrayed and thus almost shaken.

[30] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[31] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[32] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[33] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[34] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[35] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[36] . Ibid. p. 100; chapter 22.
[37] . Ibid. p. 106; chapter 24.

And here lies the importance of this little episode of Charlotte's marriage in the development of Elizabeth's personality. Elizabeth has a high opinion of her own ability to read the characters and motives of other people; to her the intricate characters are the most amusing. The comedy of errors in which she is soon involved proves her weakness and fallibility and teaches her that real life does not permit a stance of detached observation. For Elizabeth, unlike her father, is no disillusioned cynic. On all important matters she thinks and feels deeply; to a few chosen people, like Charlotte, she is closely and affectionately bound. Despite herself, Elizabeth will be drawn into conflicts in which she cannot remain an observer and will find herself fighting to defend the right to self-respect and high principles that, in the world of Jane's novels, constitute the moral basis of a heroine's life. And sometimes, in this fight, she is found to be on the wrong side; this has happened in the case of Charlotte; she ' reflects ' but subjectively; she takes the whole episode as a personal betrayal; she feels as if her ' pride ' has been wounded. Collins and Charlotte seem to have hurt Elizabeth's vanity, and this has initiated the prejudice she will nourish against him.

Jane understands this predicament of her sister Elizabeth better and so she asks her to be objective –

> "' My dear Lizzy, do not give way to such feelings as these. They will ruin your happiness. You do not make allowance enough for difference of situation and temper. Consider Mr. Collins's respectability, and Charlotte's prudent, steady character. Remember that she is one of a large family; that as to fortune, it is a most eligible match; and be ready to believe for everybody's sake, that she may feel something like regard and esteem for our cousin. ' " [38]

Elizabeth is not to be swayed by the compulsions of practical life. She is still at the high and pure level of principle. She will remain at that level till she is compelled to come down to the earth and accept the compulsion of the worldly life by the Lydia-Wickham incidents. So, she asks Jane –

> "' You shall not defend her, though it is Charlotte Lucas. You shall not, for the sake of one individual, change the meaning of principle and integrity, nor endeavour to persuade yourself or me, that selfishness is prudence, and insensibility of danger, security for happiness.' "[39]

Idealist she has to be. She must stick to her own ideal of love and marriage. Such events as Charlotte–Collins marriage and Lydia-Wickham marriage are there in the novel to strengthen her faith in her ideal. These events make her see the weaknesses of the society of which she is a part as well as of the individuals living in that society. At the same time, they show her own weakness. The society is to be seen and understood not from the ivory tower of her ideal. To

[38] . Ibid. pp. 100-07; chapter 24.
[39] . Ibid. p. 107; chapter 24.

know the reality and to understand it properly she has to come down to the real earth. It is when a man or a woman does not do that, he or she is said to be suffering from pride and prejudice. Her creator wants her to free herself from this pride and prejudice and come down to the real world which consists of varieties of life with their various ways of life. To totally deny their existence or to reject their ways of life or thinking is to see only the half-truth. The ideal becomes partial or imperfect if it is based on a negative attitude and denial of the real. Elizabeth's ideal of love and marriage has to be perfect by accommodating people like Charlotte, Wickham and Lydia. At last, she accepts them and finds that her life is happier and the people round about her in her family and society are happier.

It is to prove her wrong that Charlotte invites Elizabeth to her home so that she could see with her own eyes and judge with her mind. Once, in her talk with Collins, while refusing his proposal, she had these lines to say – " 'Can I speak plainer? Do not consider me now as an elegant female intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart.' "[40] Austen finds that in her heroine still this element of the "rational" has not reached the necessary perfection and so she has failed to grasp the "truth" in the case of Charlotte's marriage. It will come to her only when she lives with Charlotte at her home. There she marks the change that she had never expected–

> "But though everything seemed neat and comfortable, she was not able to gratify him by any sigh of repentance, and rather looked with wonder at her friend that she could have so cheerful an air, with such a companion."[41]

Again – "…and while Sir William accompanied him, Charlotte took her sister and friend over the house, extremely well pleased, probably, to have the opportunity of showing it without her husband's help."[42]

Further – " … and when it closed, Elizabeth, in the solitude of her chamber, had to meditate upon Charlotte's degree of contentment, to understand her address in guiding, and composure in bearing with, her husband, and to acknowledge that it was all done very well. " [43]

Her stay with Charlotte was all comfortable; her previous ' pang ' and disillusionment have no place here; everything is accounted here. All this suggests a change in Elizabeth's attitude towards greater objectivity and rationality which is ready to accommodate the prudent marriage too. 'Marriage with affection' is a priority with her but, in the present circumstance of the society, if the prudent marriage leads to happiness, it is also acceptable; she has to make

[40] . Ibid. p. 87 ; chapter 19.
[41] . Ibid.p.122 ; chapter 28.
[42] . Ibid.p.123 ; chapter 28.
[43] . Ibid.p.124 ; chapter 28.

way for that. Mr. Bennet's disregard of the choice of a mate cost him the rational happiness of a lifetime or gives him the punishment of a lifetime. The casualness with which Mr. Collins goes around in search of a marriage partner is appalling. But he is capable of getting the joy of life. Charlotte says – " 'Why should you be surprised, my dear Eilza? – Do you think it incredible that Mr. Collins should be able to procure any woman's good opinion, because he was not so happy as to succeed with you. ' " [44] Jane Austen's verdict on married happiness that follows is well summed up in the lines – "When Mr. Collins could be forgotten, there was really a great air of comfort throughout, and by Charlotte's evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten." [45]

The fact is life offers very little choice, either travails of spinsterhood or the lesser evil of a marriage of convenience. Charlotte chooses Mr. Collins and makes Elizabeth wiser, broader, and accommodative. That is a positive growth in her personality. And that is a milestone in her life. Her knowledge, a positive contribution of Charlotte episode, that her own ability to judge character and predict the actions and feelings of her acquaintances are far from perfect, is an important step on the way to self-knowledge, to her meditation on the contents of Darcy's explanatory letter, her recognition, at last, of the extent of her own misjudgement and her penitent admission –

> "' How despicably have I acted! ' She cried: ' I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. – How humiliating is this discovery! – Yet, how just a humiliation! – Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. – Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never know myself.' " [46]

Darcy and her relationship with him might be the immediate context of this long statement. But her genuine confession covers her whole life "till this moment."

1.4. Other Minor Relations

The different episodes delineating human relations – relations between the parents and the daughter, between the friends and among the minor characters and the heroine – emphasize the psychological scheme of things. Though Elizabeth considers herself to be above everyone else, yet the novelist wants her to move through the devious ways of life, commit mistakes, then correct them and finally come to the right point and conclusion in life. These episodes are

[44] . Ibid.p.100 ; chapter 22.
[45] . Ibid.p.123; chapter 28.
[46] . Ibid.p.162; chapter 36.

the important milestones in the development of the main story and of the personality of Elizabeth. At each milestone, she gets a new vision of life, a new clarity about life and about herself as well as others. As she develops, the story and the theme of the novel develop. Both the developments are interlinked. And it is through this simultaneous and interlinked development that the novel gets a structure of its own. In each episode, she interacts with a new man or a set of men; there is a collision of mind; this collision gives her a new light; it further clarifies and reinforces her vision of a "marriage with affection."

Elizabeth's general sense of superiority is partly justified. But it is partly an illusion that, in the course of the novel, will have to give way to fact. She makes the sensible pronouncement that first impressions are deceptive and then is deceived by her own first impressions of Darcy. She gives Darcy the arch advice about the necessity of changing one's own opinion and herself makes the same mistake of sticking to her own opinion. When she hears Wickham's account of Darcy, she claims to know what exactly one should think and turns out to be mistaken in what she thinks.

But every mistake committed by her brings an improvement in her thought and vision and brings her still closer to her goal. Mr. Collins is not in the novel because he is funny but because Jane Austen's psychological scheme requires him. The significance of Elizabeth's rejection of his proposal is not that she sees through him, for it would be scarcely possible not to. In rejecting him she rejects marrying solely for worldly advantage. Her marrying him would effectively ensure that Mr. Bennet's entailed estate would remain in the family. But this would have been marrying for the wrong reason. Rejecting him helps prepare her to accept a man as wealthy as Darcy for the right reason rather than the wrong one. Mr. Collins's humble abode borders on Rosings, the seat of Darcy's aunt; and when Elizabeth visits Hunsford, the place she could have occupied, Mr. Collins points out to her the prospect of Rosings. And it is at Rosings itself that Elizabeth meets some of the society she will take a place in when she marries Darcy. For that she has Mr. Collins to thank.

Elizabeth's second romantic possibility is Wickham. Her inability to see through him immediately thus shows something not only about his subtlety, but about herself. He is a splendid incarnation of Jane Austen's protean false hero who will take almost any impression the heroine wants to give him. It is no wonder that Elizabeth finds truth in his looks for, to some degree, she is looking at herself. He answers her wishes, herself largely creating what she sees. Elizabeth is now convinced that, whether married or single, Wickham must always be her model of the amiable and pleasing. This arch aloof young lady who has been so proud of her

discernment is going to have to learn that, like all mortals and like all Jane Austen's heroines, she is capable of romantic illusions that lead to error.

Elizabeth's discovering the truth about Wickham is inseparable from her discovering the truth about Darcy. The two exist largely in terms of each other. To some extent Darcy is what he is in the novel because Wickham is what he is. Darcy's letter giving an account of Wickham's true character is therefore also a revelation of his own. It seems impossible to make a final separation between the two. This is remarkable but seems difficult to accept. Yet it is at the heart of the novel. Darcy's father was Wickham's godfather; the young Darcy and Wickham were raised together; their pictures hang over the mantelpiece at Pemberley; they both marry into the same family.

Wickham thus seems inextricably bound up in the romance of Elizabeth and Darcy. Only because he exists can they marry. That is clearly evident in the plot. It is Elizabeth's misconceptions concerning Wickham's character that are part of the reason Darcy writes the letter disclosing his own. Then Lydia's elopement with Wickham causes Elizabeth to feel that she could indeed have loved Darcy. Then Wickham's willingness to marry Lydia for money allows Darcy to show the devotion and generosity that eventually bring Elizabeth and him together in marriage.

From all these minor episodes we can deduce a metaphysical law in the novels of Austen. All sorts of evil, manifested in its various forms in the family and the society, ultimately lead to the good and the welfare of the characters who are closely related to the evil and foolish persons. Such an evil is an essential and a real part of the family and the society; they cannot be wished away. The only thing that can be wished is that it should ultimately lead to the good and the welfare of the people concerned. It easily tries to obstruct and to retard the good. However, in the maneuvering, the good ultimately comes to the fore and makes the evil come along with it. Wickham is an important link in the happy ending of the novel which is concerned with the full mature growth of both reason and feeling in the character of Elizabeth and Darcy leading to their marriage with affection. Thus, the theme of the novel comes a full circle and gives it a round and sound structure.

Wickham is an instrument thus preparing both Elizabeth and Darcy for the final end. Her acceptance of her errors of judgment regarding Wickham and Darcy clears and sharpens her understanding of her situation and her final end. But something else also must happen to push her to the end. There is something she has to learn, something that will require the offices of a mentor. Watching her psychological development, Austen introduces the Gardiners at the

proper moment and place. They will carry Elizabeth forward towards her final happiness at Pemberley, in Derbyshire.

The suitableness of the Gardiners as a companion to Elizabeth has been insisted upon by the novelist – "Her aunt assured her that she was, and Elizabeth having thanked her for the kindness of her hints, they parted; a wonderful instance of advice being given on such a point, without being resented."[47] The advice here relates to Wickham. From here till the end, they play an important part in brining Elizabeth and Darcy together, not only at Pemberley but latter at Longbourn after Mr. Gardiner has turned over to Darcy the business of settling Lydia's marriage. Mrs. Gardiner, on the other hand, communicates with Elizabeth and reveals to her and convinces her of the good qualities of mind and spirit of Darcy which he has so far failed to show to Elizabeth. The most important point here is her revelation with conviction that it will have its proper impact on Elizabeth and help her in coming to her decision. Darcy, before he is married to Elizabeth, also needs someone who can objectively and sympathetically open his real character to Elizabeth. And the last sentence of the novel is devoted to Elizabeth's gratitude towards these two who had been the means of uniting her with Darcy –

> "With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them; and they were both over sensible of the warmest gratitude towards the persons who, by bringing her into Derbyshire, had been the means of uniting them. " [48]

Therefore, the Gardiners have worked as the spiritual mentors of Elizabeth. Collins and Wickham as much as the parents and sisters can also be called as her mentors; but their impact is negative. In rejecting them and their attitudes, she comes to the acceptance of Darcy. But the Gardiners put a direct positive influence on her; Elizabeth accepts them and their direction as they are and in their totality. They have no direct role to play in the romantic plot; they are always behind the scenes but move the ropes from there.

They do this by bringing Elizabeth down to the world of reality from her own world of Pride and Prejudice – the unreal world. To bring her down into their world is their main function in the novel. They know that the true happiness of life comes from the acceptance of life as it is. Mr. Gardiner is not ashamed that he lives by his trade –

> "Mr. Gardiner was a sensible, gentlemanlike man, greatly superior to his sister, as well by nature as education. The Netherfield ladies would have had difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable."[49]

[47]. Ibid. p.114; chapter 26.
[48]. Ibid. p.300; chapter 61.
[49] . Ibid.p.110; chapter 25.

Others may be but that is nothing to them. He has intelligence, taste, and good manners without any self-conscious detachment from people who do not have them. Charlotte has all these qualities; Elizabeth should learn to appreciate at least their presence in her friend – and this is what Jane wants her to do. Elizabeth, though half-heartedly, realizes her mistake when she visits Charlotte's home. The work half done by Charlotte is done fully by Gardiners. All is joy and kindness in their house. They seem to have the even, tolerant serenity and harmony of nature itself. These they want to instill in her and so they plan to take her to see rocks and mountains. They know that this Nature will lead Elizabeth to the true human nature whose glimpse one can have only by being a part of this world as one can have a real view of Nature by being a part of its rock and mountain.

They are the first to warn Elizabeth about Wickham. At Pemberley, Mrs. Gardiner guides her niece to his picture, his true likeness, the equivalent for his physiognomy to what Darcy's letter was for Wickham's character. It is she who must do it. She asks smilingly how Elizabeth likes what she sees. Facts have begun to penetrate Elizabeth's illusions; she is learning to see, and now in front of the picture – she cannot smile. Her self-satisfied illusions are vanishing –

> "Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression."[50]

Confronting Wickham is inseparable from confronting Darcy, and inevitably in the next sentence Elizabeth is shown a picture of Darcy. Finally, in the culmination of the process of discovery that began when she thought his character was decided, she confronts the true, three-dimensional Darcy himself. This famous meeting is a purely symbolic scene in the novel where Elizabeth and Darcy's love should suddenly prosper. The whole scene seems to be cast in the mould of a sentimental or Gothic novel. The heroine there is pursued by a villain until, at last, in the very nick of time, turning a corner to avoid him, she runs into the arms of the Hero himself, who having just shaken off the scruples which fettered him before, was at the very moment setting off in pursuit of her. This may be taken as a coincidental turn of the plot. It is a handy fictional representation of a psychological change that has mostly occurred already and needs merely to be manifested somehow in the plot. The plot is merely serving as a kind of thin, fragile, grudging allegory for a higher psychological drama inside the heroine's mind.

[50] . Ibid.p.192; chapter 43.

Elizabeth now seems ready to see the true Darcy. Gardiners brought Elizabeth to Pemberley by way of a substitute for the lakes, a district rich in picturesque scenes. Here the picturesque has come true; Elizabeth is to marry it. When Elizabeth and Darcy finally meet face to face, she finds his behaviour strikingly altered. But the Darcy who appears on the lawn is more the result of changes in Elizabeth than in himself. She has surrendered some pride and prejudice to facts that have proved her wrong about herself. She is now humbled enough to see the world as it is; and so, Austen has set Darcy before her.

Thus, there has been a very pleasant and surprising change in the attitude of both Elizabeth and Darcy. She had begun by joining all the neighbourhood in disliking Darcy's forbidding, disagreeable countenance. Now at Pemberley, she has never seen him so pleasant. He had begun by thinking her not handsome enough to tempt him. Now, she is one of the handsomest women of his acquaintance. When their eyes meet at last, the novel has come to its natural conclusion at Pemberley. But the novel does not end there.

This is so because, in a systematic course of psychological reformation, Elizabeth has still one stage to go. Until this stage is complete, the novel cannot end, even though the coherent plot may have. The heroine, now receptive to the world, has yet to be brought down formally into it.

And this purpose is served by Lydia's sudden and unexpected elopement with Wickham. Elizabeth is to reach her final initiation into the world through her younger sister Lydia. The elopement is the event that finally draws Elizabeth down into the world and brings about her marriage. That is the purpose of Elizabeth-Lydia relationship. Elizabeth considers the elopement as a proof of family weakness; she feels humbled and mortified. This mortification is very important in her psychological development. What is important is that the elopement is proof of ' family' weakness in a profound sense, for Elizabeth too has shown the weakness. She too has found Wickham a model of the amiable and pleasing; and she owed the beginning of her disenchantment, not to her own discernment, but to Darcy. Elizabeth is thus a little like Lydia, from whom she has held herself aloof with such ironic detachment; Lydia is a little like Elizabeth without having been given the benefit of truth in a letter.

The whole episode makes Elizabeth a Bennet, a sister to Lydia, a woman, a woman of the world. Thus, this elopement episode, showing the relationship of the sister, is essential for the heroine's psychological reformation. The inevitable fruit of the elopement is that now Elizabeth is ready to marry. She is ready to accept Darcy. The effect of the elopement on

her has been exactly calculated to make her understand her own wishes. Never, she muses, had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now.

Elizabeth now returns home. The novel has come full circle. Elizabeth and Jane's loop out into the world has left them where they began. Bingley and Darcy are again coming to Netherfield – two single men in possession of good fortunes and in want of wives. The success of Austen's irony lies in the fact that it brings together the characters in a relationship that rises above absolute and final judgements on their relative merits. It has bound the characters together in a family relationship where both are not alike, but each needs the other irrespective of the fact of the one being good or bad. The Jane in the family will always need the Elizabeth to mediate between her and the world as it really is; Elizabeth will always need Jane as well. Bingley and Darcy will need one another. In this relationship Wickham also finds a place of his own. He also has earned a place, although grudging, in the same family. Thus, Elizabeth's journey in the world of love is a pilgrim's progress to the family and the home, with all turbulence subsided, pain eliminated, and happiness rediscovered. The purity, perfection and pious piety and joy of one soul radiate all around and others in the family and the society once again join together to share this resplendent radiance. Even the arrogance of Lady Catherine is mellowed –

> "Lady Catherine was extremely indignant on the marriage of her nephew; and as she gave way to all the genuine frankness of her character in her reply to the letter which announced its arrangement, she sent him language so very abusive, especially of Elizabeth, that for some time all intercourse was at an end. But at length, by Elizabeth's persuasion, he was prevailed on to overlook the offence, and seek a reconciliation; and, after a little further resistance on the part of his aunt, her resentment gave way, either to her affection for him, or her curiosity to see how his wife conducted herself; and she condescended to wait on them at Pemberley, …"[51]

So, Elizabeth's claim – "I am the happiest creature in the world. Perhaps other people have said so before, but not with such justice. I am happier even than Jane; she only smiles, I laugh." [52]

Her claim is not imprudent. Hers will be a hilarious laughter; she can now laugh to her heart's content for she feels that now all is well with the world.

1.5. Conclusion

This research study comes to the conclusion that Jane Austen's treatment of human relations in the novel Pride and Prejudice is perfect. Perfection comes from a perfect combination of the social critic – in terms of her feminism and human relations – and the artist. Austen was certainly committed to an aesthetic that stressed the purity of the work of art. She

[51] . Ibid.p300; chapter 61.
[52] . Ibid.p296; chapter 60.

was also deeply interested in social problems, and she can be considered as a social reformer for the then eighteenth-century England society. She combined these characteristics in her own highly individual way. Austen never succumbed to the temptation to turn the novel into a vehicle for propaganda. On the other hand, her novel is very far from being a "pure" work of art; there is, simplicity, a great deal of social criticism in it. She succeeds in combining the two in perfect harmony.

With Austen, 'Human Relations' must be understood in the broadest sense – as referring to Austen's intense awareness of her identity as a woman, her interest in feminine problems. Its meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of women's rights. Her novel shows that, far from being a mere excrescence on her work, feminism, in its larger sense, is essential to her conception of reality.

Austen found evidences of barbarism in every aspect of the then life. It took many forms: paternal tyranny in the home, male supremacy in the family and the society and intellectual rigidity within the mind. Her novel *Pride and Prejudice* is a dystopian satire upon the then society to remedy these evils. Austen held that social reform is a necessary first step on the way to creating new values. Austen is a feminist artist, and her feminism grows out of a desire for wholeness and harmony which is the true meaning and value of human relations.

So, to Austen, the highest aim of human relations was to prepare the way for profound adjustments in the man-woman life in the then society. According to her, that will be achieved by a union in the shape of an evolutionary love and a companionate marriage between her heroine, Elizabeth, and her hero, Darcy. It appears as if her heroines, and heroes too, are making a life-long effort to achieve the inner consummation. They become satisfied once this union is achieved and there ends Austen's narration too.

Thus, in the field of human relations, her novel is concerned more with the spiritual condition of women than with their worldly success although the latter follows as a corollary of the former. Her emphasis on the mind and spirit is an essential part of her concern for human relations as well as for feminism.

Austen's aim, as a feminist, as an explorer of human relations and as an artist, was to contribute to this exploration of feminine values. Thus, she had brought to human relations something much more interesting and profound than an advocacy of equal rights. It was her

real contribution to unveil the essential quality of female experience where it differs from the male.

Her novel *Pride and Prejudice* is a kind of record of this search for wholeness. It is an attempt to embody and express this elusive unity of being. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create any more than a mind that is purely feminine. One must be free from pride and prejudice.

Jane Austen is not as the other women artists; she has a mind-set with a total freedom from the clutches of literary convention. She devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it with the change of substance, she devised a change of style and form.

The one major quality of this artistic form is objectivity: can the artist keep his attention whole and undivided upon his own artistic object? What genius, what integrity it must have required in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to hold fast to the thing as she saw it without shrinking. Only Jane Austen did it. She wrote as women write, not as men write. She ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue. This was her greatest achievement as an explorer of human relations and as artist. Her mind was luminous; no indignation destroys the clarity; no self-consciousness clouds the purity of her vision. Her novel *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the intense perceptions of an exquisite sensibility in the clear light of universal ideas.

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