

The Portrayal of Society and Culture in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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Jane Austen (1775-1817), was certainly not commonly familiar as a writer during her life time one of England's primary novelists. It was on December 16, 1775, Jane Austen was born at Steventon Rectory in Hampshire. She was the seventh child of the clergyman and his wife, George and Cassandra Austen.

Pride and Prejudice (1813) begins with this famous statement "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (PP 15) Mrs. Bennet knows that the modest family estate is to be inherited by William Collins when Mr. Bennet dies. At a ball, the rich and newly arrived Charles Bingley takes a direct concern in the eldest Bennet daughter, the attractive and reluctant Jane. The encounter between his friend Darcy and Elizabeth is less pleasant. Although Austen shows them fascinated by each other, she converses the contract of first impressions: pride of vigorous and prosperity and prejudice against the social humbleness of Elizabeth's family hold Darcy aloof, while Elizabeth is similarly passionate both by the pride of dignity and by prejudice against Darcy's arrogance.

The haughty Collins subsequently reaches, trusting to espouse one of the Bennet sisters. Elizabeth rejects his offer of marriage and he in turn betrothed to her friend Charlotte Lucas. During this time, Elizabeth meets the delightful George Wickham, a military officer. There is a mutual fascination between the two, and he enlightens her that Darcy has denied him his legacy.

After Bingley quickly leaves for London, Elizabeth's hatred of Darcy rises as she becomes persuaded that he is disheartening Bingley's association with Jane. Darcy, however, has fully-fledged progressively fond of Elizabeth, admiring her intelligence and liveliness. While visiting the now-married Charlotte, Elizabeth sees Darcy, who admits his love for her and proposes. An amazed Elizabeth declines his offer, and, when Darcy hassles enlightenment,

she blames him of breaking up Jane and Bingley. He also reveals that Wickham, after exaggerated his legacy, irritated to marry Darcy's then 15-year-old sister in a challenge to gain ownership of her fortune. With these exposes, Elizabeth starts to grasp Darcy in a new light.

Soon Lydia ran away with Wickham. The news is encountered with great anxiety by Elizabeth, since the disgraceful affair—which is suspected to end in marriage—could collapse the position of the other Bennet sisters. When Elizabeth tells Darcy, he encourages Wickham to marry Lydia, offering him money. Despite Darcy's effort to save his intervention a secret, Elizabeth learns of his movements. At the encouragement of Darcy, Bingley subsequently proceeds, and he and Jane become betrothed. Finally, Darcy suggests again to Elizabeth, who this time accepts. The social class in England in the nineteenth century is prejudiced by the industrial revolution. The influence of the industrial revolution had a great effect predominantly in founding the structure of the society.

In the nineteenth century, the structure of the society involved of third major classes in England. They exist upper class, middle class, and lower class. But Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* only replicates two structures of the society, the upper class and middle class. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen shows that Darcy's family belongs to the upper class. It can be seen from their country estate, and snobbish regime. They live at the large estate and they have company. The income also classifies the social status of someone. The more someone's income the higher social status she or he gets in society. The income shows Darcy's social status. The annual income of Fitzwilliam Darcy's is ten thousand pounds.

Darcy's neighboring friend is Mr. Bingley. Mr. Bingley always hosts dancing parties. Mr. Bingley is recognized based on his wealth. His wealth went from inheritance property to the amount from his father. Lady Catherine de Bourgh's family also represents the upper class. She is Darcy's aunt. Like the other upper class family, they reside at the elite estate, which is known as Rosings park. It is a beautiful modern building house in England. Thus Jane Austen desires to expose that the upper class usually stay in the comfortable and rich estate. It is also completed with a beautiful park in front of the house as an emblem of their social status.

Bennet's family consists of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet and their five unmarried daughters. The Bennets' reside in Longbourn a small town in England. Bennet's income is two thousands a year. William Collins is a Clergyman. During Austen's time, clergymen in the Church of England increasingly came from the middle class. The occupation was viewed as a learned and prominent profession and provided a modest income. Actually, the lifestyle of the middle class is almost the same as the upper class. Jane Austen also draws the class distinction which is in fact very inflexible at her time. The elite class also displays their individuality to the society. Their performances are stylish and deluxe. They like to have the peculiarity of rank preserved. There are distinctions among the landed classes that are strong-minded by the amount of wealth possessed by the members. In this novel, for instance Miss Bingley and her sister miscalculate Bennet's family because they are not prosperous compared to them. This situation is exposed when Miss Elizabeth visited her old sister in Netherfield.

In the nineteenth century many people especially the upper class enjoyed aristocrats' extreme diet, and married women from this class enjoyed increasing relaxation. The amount of reading and writing grew voluminously.

Many actions occurred during leisure. One of them was dancing at the ball. It became an activity for most people in their leisure time. In this novel, Mrs. Bennet represents this type because she always encourages their five daughters to attend the ball following the dancing party. They come to the dancing party almost every day during their leisure time and this becomes their lifestyle.

Another major kind of marriage which occurs in this novel is the one concerning marrying an exterior social class person which happens in the novel. This is when someone from a rather high class marries a village girl which would be measured as a social disaster. This is demonstrated by Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposal towards Elizabeth. He keeps on asking for someone of a much lower class.

Materialism was given importance in this novel. If Mr. Bennet dies the family will be left with nothing, because their entire property will go to Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet desires her daughters married because if they do not then they will have no place to live.

In the nineteenth century, England the majority of women did marry. After the marriage, the wives tended to stay at home to manage the households and took care of the family. In this novel, Charlotte Lucas after becoming Williams Collins's wife, also is forced to stay at home and manage the household.

In the traditional British class system, wealth is passed through the legacy of family property. Family estates were usually inherited by the oldest son and sometimes daughters were given smaller incomes. In this novel, Mr. Bennet cannot inherit their wealth to their daughters but he inherits; to his male cousin, Mr. William Collins.

After analyzing *Pride and Prejudice*, the researcher concludes; Firstly, based on the structural analysis of the novel it can be concluded that in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen conveys a seminal message that some people use marriage to improve their social economic status. Just to give the moral message, Jane Austen introduced the major characters and divided them into two classes namely, the upper class and lower class. She then writes the plot of the novel like that to make it infeasible for the major character to get married in their different social classes. Jane Austen wrote the structural rudiments of the novel in such a way that the structural rudiments are connected to one another forming a harmony.

Finally, based on the sociological analysis, it can be summed up that in *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen shows the social truths of the English society including social, economic, political, science and technology, cultural and religious facets in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The dominant aspect in the novel is the social aspect, especially social stratification and social relation. In this novel Jane Austen also criticizes the society that tends to consider social class as this only issue.

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