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**RETHINKING MARRIAGE AS EVIDENT IN THE WORKS OF JANE  
AUSTEN**

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**ABSTRACT**

Marriage, earlier, was seen as forceful or compulsion for women especially the ones belonging to lower castes. This has been roped in by writer Jane Austen to project her novels. Through characters like Lydia, Elizabeth, Darcy, Austen projects the shifts which came in the life of women after marriage. Now, in the postmodern context, women are independent and are not dependent on their male counterparts for asserting their rights and independence. Relationships are gauged through sense, sensibility, love, and hatred, trust, which one has or shows to other. Marriage has been reconsidered as providing social respect and security to women, which was nowhere in the scene during earlier times.

**Keywords:** Marriage, rethinking, works, Jane Austen

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a central theme considered by Jane Austen in her novels. However, it is never presented as an ideal representation for romanticism. Writing in such a society places marriage largely as an event providing financial security and social position to women. Austen uses her fictional mindset to interrogate the values that govern marital choices of women. Instead of celebrating marriage as solely depending on wealth, status, or fleeting passion, Austen attaches moral judgment, personal growth, and social pressure to consider marriage as a complex institution demarcating women's identity (Liano, 2025). Projection of the characters reflect transformation as characters who are unhappy, finds convenience, or deeply fulfil unions, are projected as happy, inconvenient, and cannot fulfill the needs of union members. Austen rethinks marriage, for these women, as a partnership which balances love with respect and responsibility. In doing so, her works are critiqued, based on limitations placed on advocacy for women in terms of marriage. Here, attributes considered are mutual understanding and integrity.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jane Austen *rethought* marriage by treating it as something more than romanticism. In her novels, marriage is perceived a social test, comprised of values, judgment, gender roles, and power. These attributes are attached with women who don't have many options to assert their independence.

### 2.1. Marriage is more than love

Austen opposed fairy-tale romance and dealt with the issues with cold practicality. She was of the view that pure romance, thought without sense, is risky. She relates the reference of Lydia and Wickham, as represented in *Pride and Prejudice*. Referring to Charlotte Lucas marrying Mr. Collins, as Tariq, Shah, and Mahmood, (2024) argued that Jane stated that pure convenience or money cannot buy happiness. According to her, the marriages is approved, as it balances affection, respect, and realism. Elizabeth Bennet, Darcy, Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth are the characters who defines this balance.

## **2.2. Marriage: A survival strategy for women**

Austen believed that marriage is often the *only* way to make women feel financially secured. Through marriage, women also get social respect without which they cannot easily inherit property. It is striking that work options are limited for women. Even if they get work options, they are low-paying with which they cannot fulfill needs of the family members. In this case, Kumari, (2025) argues that a universal fact is a “bad” marriage is far better than no marriage at all. Through the representation of characters like Charlotte Lucas Austen gains sympathy, critiquing compulsion for women to choose security over happiness.

## **2.3. Moral and intellectual equality: Signs of good marriage**

Austen maintains consistent in rewarding couples who learns and grows by showing self-reflect, equalizing with others in terms of behavioral expressions. Mention is made of Elizabeth and Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*, who are compelled to confront their flaws and correct them. Reference is made of Emma Woodhouse who is made to learn humility before marrying. Marriage, for Austen, as Usmani and Kaul, (2024), is effective when both partners respect each other’s mental status and not their status.

## **2.4. Social class cannot decide everything**

Austen does not ignore class, but challenges the idea of it manipulating love. her analysis includes criticism towards snobbery and rigid class rules. For this, characters like Lady Catherine are ranked and often mocked. According to Gómez, (2025), important lesson is non-existence of classes in society, and assertiveness of characters in the given circumstances.

## **2.5. Marriage: A moral choice, not a happy ending**

Most of Austen’s novels end with weddings, when characters feel *earned* identity, which is not automatic. In this explanation, marriage is perceived as a reward which enhances personal growth, ethical behavior, and self-knowledge. Based on this, marriage is less equated with happiness and more with transitions into the identity. On a broader platform, marriage is correlated with social institution enhances familiarity with real consequences. However, there are limitations yet power for women to exert their influence through choices. In this context., Brodey, (2024) argued that marriage is seen as a partnership where women are to be provided with love, respect, and responsibility to care for other.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Interpretivism philosophy is apt as it helps in interpreting facts, ideas, notions, theories related to marriage as described and presented by Jane Austen. This philosophy leads to deductive approach selection, which is effective for deducing the relevant facts on social position of women after marriage, as described by Jane Austen in her novels. Here, descriptive research design is apt, as the changes and transitions which come in life of women, after marriage is described. Relevant data is collected from secondary sources like books, journals, and papers. Collected data is analyzed through narratives and cases including descriptions of changes for women after marriage. Collected data is analyzed through narratives and cases on marriage bringing change in lives of women in all classes and constructs in the society. Ethics is maintained in the form of acknowledging the sources used for averting the instances of plagiarism and collusion.

### 4. RESULTS

Jane Austen rethought marriage in her novels through presentation as complex social and moral institution. As compared to this, simple romantic ideal was sidelined while discussing about marriage. Writing in a society determining woman's financial security and social standing for women, Austen explores pressures manipulating marital choices, wealth, class, and reputation. Referring to some successful and unsuccessful unions, marriages based solely on convenience, economic gain, or impulsive passion are condemned (Lubey, 2025). At the same time, idea of marriage as a partnership, grounded in mutual respect, emotional compatibility, and moral growth are supported. Emphasis is on personal development and ethical judgment, which Austen challenges through conventional views of marriage. Advocacy is done for unions, which balance love with responsibility and realism.

#### 4.1 Pride and Prejudice

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen presented marriage not merely as a social necessity or romantic ideal, but as a moral and emotional partnership. Setting is a society where women's security depends heavily on their husband. Different types of marriages are revealed in the novel, projecting strengths and failures of characters. Through unions based on convenience, impulsive

passion, genuine affection, Austen condemns the pressures of class, wealth, and reputation which puts women at problem while making marital decisions (Zeller, 2025). Ultimately, *Pride and Prejudice* highlights successful marriage as effective when mutual respect, personal growth, and sincere love, all are there instead of just social advantage.

#### **4.2 Emma**

In *Emma*, Jane Austen presents marriage not as an urgent necessity but as a thoughtful choice. By thoughtful, Austen means maturity in the form of self-awareness deemed necessary for women. Unlike many of Austen's heroines, Emma Woodhouse is sketched as financially independent and socially secure. With this reference, Austen gets the allowance to explore marriage something beyond economic survival. Emma's misguided matchmaking and her own misunderstandings about love, leads to analysis of dangers of pride, manipulation, and self-deception in relationships, which becomes highlighted after marriage. Austen conducts a comparative study by taking up the issues of being ill-suited, one-sided attractions, steady, respectful among others (Tripathi & Nanda, 2024). Here, reference is taken for the bond which is mapped between Emma and Mr. Knightley. The bonding emphasizes moral growth, equality, and mutual understanding. Therefore, marriage emerges as a reward for ensuring personal development. Instead, mere social obligation is reinforced by Austen through her belief on true marital happiness, which depends on character more as compared to convenience.

#### **4.3 Sense and sensibility**

In *Sense and Sensibility*, marriage is analyzed through examination of tensions between emotional impulse and rational judgment as applicable in marital choices. The setting is a society, where women's financial security depends heavily on advantageous marriages. Countering this, Liano, (2025) argues that marriage is advantageous if partner is supportive, caring, loving and respectful. Contrasting attitudes toward love could be seen through the character references of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Delving deep, Marianne's belief in passionate, expressive love exposes readers to the dangers prevalent in unchecked emotions (Reesman, 2024). Compared to this, Elinor's restraint highlights the importance yields sensory control and moral responsibility. Essence are failed expectations, concealed engagements, and eventual unions, through which Austen suggests non-existence of sensibility and sense for ensuring marital happiness. Here, Austen redefines marriage as a balanced partnership, foundation of which lies in the attributes of

affection, integrity, and prudence. All these are critiqued in terms of reckless romanticism and pure practical alliances.

## 5. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the cases and narratives, it can be concluded that Jane Austen rethought marriage as an institution, which provided financial independence, social security and status to women. References were made to novels like *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, where characters are sketched as being engaged in bonds. It is the circumstances which compel characters to engage in a relationship. For some characters, relationship is not as happy, as the partners are not supportive enough. If viewed generally, then it can be asserted that marriage transformed identity of women which was suppressed under patriarchal dominance earlier. But if expectations from marriage is not fulfilled, then women's predicament becomes more worse.

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