



Emotional Violence
In Jane Austen's *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

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The world of *Pride and Prejudice* is a limited world of Long bourn, Nether field, Hunsford and Pemberley, and it seems to be an entirely placid world with no signs of violence or agitation. But the various occurrences in the novel can be viewed as various instances of afflicted emotional violence. The title of the novel brings together the feelings of pride and prejudice, both of which are negative in the sense that they lead to the emotionally perturbed state of mind. In the novel, pride leads to prejudice and prejudice invites pride. It is Mr. Darcy who first exhibits pride in refusing to dance with Elizabeth Bennet. Elizabeth is thus prejudiced against him but her prejudice itself stems from her wounded pride. It is because of the family pride that Darcy interferes with Jane Bennet and Bingley's love affair: through his pride, he is led to believe that his is the only right evaluation. His pride keeps him aloof, apart from society, full of self love. But he finds himself more and more fascinated by Elizabeth. Their relation begins with antipathy and aversion. They misunderstand each other's words, and during parties and discussions, they misinterpret each other's behaviour. Beset by family pride, Darcy assumes a tone of offending superiority, blinded by her prejudice against him Elizabeth scorns him. Elizabeth and Darcy for all their intellectual capability and reliance on sense also undergo the turbulent, conflict of emotions in discovering their love for each other.

The emotions like envy, jealousy, cunning, hypocrisy, pride, vanity, snobbery are active to demonstrate emotional violence on the characters. There is the jealousy, conceit and hypocrisy of Caroline Bingley, there is the cunning villainy of Wickham, there is the snobbery and vanity of Lady Catherine, and there is the pretentiousness of Mr. Collins. It is these violent emotions of the characters that thwart the progress of one love-affair, and hinder the commencement of the other. Had these negative emotions been absent, the story of the novel would not have taken form.

KEY WORDS: *emotional violence, perturbed mind, mortified, pride, prejudice, afflicted*

To juxtapose, the name Jane Austen and violence sounds somewhat weird. But a study of her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* reveals that her characters have been the victims of emotional

violence afflicted on them. Pride, prejudice, tease, sarcasm, disregard of thoughts and feelings, mockery and disdain are all present in the novel. The words, attitudes or actions displayed by the characters are violent in form as they resulted in the emotional turmoil of her characters. Emotional violence leaves the characters in anger, frustrated, insulted, embarrassed and heart-broken. And, of course, to feel frustrated, insulted, embarrassed and heart-broken are the symptoms of a wounded emotional health. They keep brooding about the harsh words spoken to them. They are compelled to shed silent tears and feel wretched.

The onslaught of violence makes the interactions between the Bennets, Bingleys and Darcys a warfare (a battle of words), so much happens at the emotional level. The characters keep hurting each other and continue the violence with mortified egos. The various twists and turns in the novel are brought with the emotions in play. Throughout the novel, the characters keep assaulting each other with emotions and feel woeful.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the initial pride of Mr. Darcy and prejudice of Elizabeth Bennet play a pivotal role in keeping them apart from each other until the pride of one and the prejudice of another gives way to the feeling of love. The characters in the novel have been the victims of emotional violence can not be denied. The characters take turns to afflict emotional violence on each other. The pride of some is mortified, some are scoffed at, some others are hurt. The war of words continues and so is the emotional violence. The novel is replete with the occurrences of emotional violence:

The arrival of a new neighbour, wealthy Mr. Bingley, promises to solve a problem for the Bennet family: they see him as an eligible bachelor for one of their five marriageable daughters. Their hopes are borne out when he is attracted to the eldest daughter, Jane. Emotional violence takes its form when at ball at Netherfield Park Darcy coldly refuses to dance with Elizabeth saying, “she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me;....(chapter 03)” This is sufficient to hurt Elizabeth’s pride. She takes an instant dislike to Darcy, who appears to be a proud, supercilious man. Since then, both Elizabeth and Darcy embark on a journey of emotional violence. Elizabeth, piqued by Darcy’s insulting remark, says, “I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine (chapter 05).”

Later in chapter 08, when Darcy gives his opinion of what the qualifications for a wife must be, Elizabeth says, “I never saw such a woman. I never saw such capacity, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united.” This hurt the pride and ego of Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley who “cried out against the injustice of her implied doubt...” Elizabeth, Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst display an emotionally violent behaviour. Miss Bingley hardly spares any chance to embarrass Elizabeth in front of others. Elizabeth also retaliates to mortify the pride of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst.

The battle of words again comes to surface when in chapter 08, while her stay at Netherfield Park, Elizabeth “...on entering the drawing-room she found the whole party at loo, and was immediately

invited to join them; but suspecting them to be playing high she declined it, and making her sister the excuse, said she would amuse herself for the short time she could stay below with a book." Miss Bingley ridicules her by sarcastically saying, "Miss Elizabeth Bennet despises cards. She is a great reader and has no pleasure in anything else." At this, Elizabeth cries, "I deserve neither such praise nor such censure; I am not a great reader, and I have pleasure in many things."

When Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance a reel with him, she spurns Darcy's proposal with these words, "you wanted me, I know, to say "yes", that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but I always delight in overthrowing those kinds of schemes and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt..... (Chapter 10)", unearthing her own mortified ego and prejudice.

Later, when Miss Bingley walking in the garden with Darcy, Elizabeth and Mrs. Hurst meet them on a path which is only wide enough for three. Caroline Bingley rudely leaves Elizabeth to walk by herself, thereby trying to insult her.

Emotional violence can also be seen in chapter 11 when Darcy mentions that everyone has a defect, Elizabeth remarks that Darcy's defect is his "propensity to hate everybody." Darcy aptly retorts, "And yours is willfully to misunderstand them." Through such kind of verbal attacks, Elizabeth and Darcy keep assailing each other. Elizabeth's mind remains occupied with the thought that Darcy dislikes her, owing to her own jaundiced judgement. In her view, Darcy is the proudest and most disagreeable of men.

In chapter 16, Elizabeth finds another reason for disliking Darcy when she hears from a fop named Wickham who has flattered her shamelessly, that Darcy had ruined his prospects years before. Wickham's narrative further alienates Elizabeth and Darcy. Here she is clearly a victim of her prejudice against Darcy. For all her intelligence, she is duped by Wickham. Elizabeth criticizes Darcy in these words: "This is quite shocking!-He deserves to be publicly disgraced."

"How strange!" Cried Elizabeth "How abominable!"

"Can such abominable pride as his, have ever done him good?"

Further, Jane Bingley is left with disappointed hopes and in misery when chances of winning Bingley are diminished as Bingley leaves for London. His sister Caroline and Darcy contrive to keep him there in order to prevent any further progress of this affair with Jane, who is not in Bingley's social class. "A day or two passed before Jane had courage to speak of her feelings to Elizabeth "oh! That my dear mother she can have no idea of the pain she gives me by her continual reflections on him."

Wickham abandons Elizabeth in favour of Miss King only on financial grounds. Elizabeth is so familiar with the system that she seems quite resigned. She now is in an abandoned, exposed position; without any real emotional support behind her. Her family continues to be unsumpathetic; Jane is now engrossed in her own affairs; the support of Charlotte has also been lost.

In chapter 32, Colonel Fitzwilliam tells Elizabeth that Darcy has recently saved a friend from an imprudent marriage. Fitzwilliam tells Elizabeth that he suspects this friend is Bingley. Elizabeth is hurt and indignant at the slight of Jane, if this is the case. Wickham confirms Elizabeth's feelings that the major responsibility in Bingley's removal from Netherfield rests with Darcy. Elizabeth: "No motive can excuse the unjust and ungenerous part you acted there.....you have been the principal means of dividing them from each other....."

The discovery of Darcy's role in the split between Jane and Bingley makes Elizabeth molder with resentment against him and just when she hates him the most Darcy reveals his love for her. Elizabeth rejects it outright in a frank and direct manner. "Elizabeth felt herself growing more angry every moment ..." ".....your manners impressing with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the followings of others, were such as to form that ground-work of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislikeI felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.(chapter 34)"The tumult of her mind was so agonizing that she did not know how to support herself. She cried for half an hour.

Highly jealous of Elizabeth, Miss Bingley (always seeking an opportunity to put Elizabeth down in front of others) makes a sneering remark to Elizabeth in chapter 45 about the loss the Bennets must feel at the transfer of the militia. But Miss Bingley does not know what pain she is then giving her dear friend (Darcy) with the mention of Wickham. Actually, her motive was to discompose Elizabeth with this ill-natured remark.

Lydia's elopement left the family with the fear of impending disgrace. Lydia's elopement is received with shock. "Lydia-the humiliation, themisery, she was bringing on them all." "Elizabethher knees trembled under her ,....she sat down, unable to support herself, and looking so miserably ill...(chapter 46)."Mrs. Bennet is unable to cope with the crisis and suffers a nervous breakdown.Mr Collin's writes a 'condolatory' letter which consists of hurtful allusions to Lydia's disposition and upbringing. He expresses his sense of relief on having escaped this taint. Messages in the same strain from Lady Catherine are included. Lydia was oblivious to the violent attack her elopement made on the emotions of the members of her family.

When Lydia and Wickham arrive at Longbourn after their wedding, Lydia is as thoughtless as ever. Elizabeth is disgusted and even Jane is shocked as Lydia chatters untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless as ever.

In chapter 53, Mr. Bennet invites Darcy and Bingley to dinner at Longbourn.Elizabeth feels vexed at Darcy's silence and gravity on the occasion. She is disappointed and fears the worst. ".....several minutes elapsed, without bringing the sound of his voice....."

Elizabeth is hurt when even her father ridicules the idea of Darcy ever loving her. "Mr. Darcy who never looks at any woman but to see a blemish, and who probably never looked at you in his life!"(chapter 57)

“Elizabeth tried to join in her father’s pleasantries, but could only force one most reluctant smile. Never had his wit been directed in a manner so little agreeable to her.”(chapter57)

Thus, in the novel, emotionally violent stance of the characters is evident. It is the emotions and their behaviour with each other which delineate the characters also. There is an amalgam of pride, prejudice, jealousy, cunning, anger, mockery, conceit and hypocrisy which designed the plot of the novel, culminating in the union of lovers.

REFERENCE:

Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice