Chapter III

Treatment of Human Relationships in relation to Love and Marriage

One of the permanent themes or subject matters of literature is treatment of human relationships. Times have changed according to which taste, temperament and sensibility have undergone a sea change, but in face of all changes what remains of paramount importance is the matrix of human relationships. It is because writers draw the materials from life, reality and society wherein lie human beings who are constant in being agents of life, change and reality in the world. Human elements are therefore the only source or stuff of literary creations. Human beings have been constantly in contact with each other for whom communication, sharing of ideas, information are inevitable. And centuries and generations have thus gone through layers over the ages.

Human beings are the agents of social, cultural, political and economic forces at work. Man is the catalytic agent, and he affects social and environmental life around. Writers are aware that the fundamental truth of life and existence is to be represented and conveyed through the creation of characters in various aspects, who are set against each other, against the society and environment to engrave their own personalities and impressions which in turn will shape their identities as distinguished one from the other.

The form and structure of any literary art is to be infused with the soul of the created character, or else it will be empty and insignificant. This very conception refutes the Aristotelian dictum that plot is the soul of tragedy and for that matter literature. However important the plot is, according to the classical thinkers, what makes the plot move is the character. Hence, plot is only secondary to character. Therefore, the essence of, specially, prose fiction is the character. Taking a cue from the quarrel between Virginia Woolf and Arnold Bennett, I am tempted to quote the latter as he made a devastating comment on *Jacob’s Room*, meaning that the former fell short of making characters in their flesh and blood:
The first thing is that the novel should seem to be true. It cannot seem true if the characters do not seem to be real. Style counts; plot counts; invention counts; originality of outlook counts; wide information counts; wide sympathy counts. If the characters are real the novel will have a chance; if they are not, oblivion will be its portion. The foundation of good fiction is character creating, and nothing else.
(qtd. in Meitei 1987: 135)

What is central to fiction writing is the creation of real characters, and nothing else, if the novel is to be given a chance. This spirit, this need, however, belongs to the nineteenth century and the eighteenth century fiction, and not to the twentieth century.

Jane Austen lived and wrote in two centuries and the seams of both the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries claimed her. Being a woman writer she had a limited range, and her flair was not the vast public sphere where great things took place. She perhaps did not know much about that to be the master of what had happened. Because of her sex she remained confined to her woman’s world of little daily happenings in small localities and in every family, in little circles or groups of people who create and continue to create the social image based on human relationship. She did not believe in the role of heroes who would be exposed to the whirlwind and tempest of violence and tragedy. They have a cringe of it, they do not dare to commit action that would decide the fate of a community or a nation. But on a narrow scale she created characters both men and women who are engaged in domestic life, activities, the goings on culminating in their union in marriage. That was the vision of Jane Austen making social and domestic ties as intricate as anything with very complex atmosphere against which young men and women are set and tested. Some go headlong towards the destiny no matter what other people would react; some others will choose to be very rash much to the shock and embarrassment of the dear and near ones while others will remain watchful, not in a hurry, studying the development of the would be spouse, building emotional equations and waiting for understanding, appreciation and moral equilibrium before the crucial take off of life is celebrated.
Jane Austen’s world of creative art is a rich panorama of human characters with varied personalities who clash, merge in their search for personal goals fulfilling social expectations of the then Age. She knew the significance of family, its expectations, and its relationship with other families, their ties, bond through news, visits, parties, dinners, gatherings – all constructing a world for the parents, their children, who are to be married off as an essential part of life, from the points of view of social security, economic reasons, and individual self-esteem. Jane Austen, who did not marry for various reasons, was not unaccustomed to the social practice, manners, and the ritual of love making, marriage, inter and intra domestic relationship. She embraced all these aspects of love, life and social and family needs to be the vitals of human existence, and not other historical events on the national and international scene. She therefore shunned herself from the vast social, political and historical events of her time, less interested in the expansionist colonial policies of Britain nor did she show visible interest in Britain’s conflict with the European nations. She took delight in the subject over which she had her mastery. She once wrote of her art that it “was a little bit of ivory two inches thick” worked over “with a brush so fine as to produce little effect after much labour”.

No wonder in the whole gamut of English literature is there ever so sure a ground as Jane Austen does in her novels, when dealing with the subject of love and marriage, the basis of human relationship. In this chapter my aim is to study some facets of human relationships as manifested in Jane Austen’s novels that provide insightful accounts of love and marriage differently. The treatment is very exciting in its diverse aspects.

When we study the novels of Jane Austen we often encounter the genuine problems of marriage as faced and experienced in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in England, especially among the middle class gentry. Dearth of avenues of employment for young ladies, dearth of young men with some income and the aggravated economy due to constant wars at home and overseas became a threat to all heroines and other female characters in Jane Austen’s novels. Because of these reasons they were always concerned with marriage. Marriage became important in the sense that it was a means of elevating one’s social status and
ensuring economic security. Hence young ladies had to acquire a husband to support and give their future security.

In *A Critical History of English Literature* David Daiches has aptly portrayed the situation of the period’s anxiety in a form of a dance. “It is a dance on the sunlit grass, but some of the dancers at least are in earnest, and if they do not secure a likeable partner before the end of the day, they will be left alone forever on the dark and deserted lawn, or forced to find refuge in the pathless woods which surround the trimly kept grass plot (Daiches 1985: 752). Unless the young ladies of meagre income catch their partners when they have their youth and beauty, they would be left behind. Rather than facing such an ugly and bleak future, the ladies of the period prefer to marry with or without love, if the young men are going to support them with a home with all its comforts. Contrary to the obsession and anxiety of her society, Jane Austen in her novels advocates a marriage which is based on love and esteem and not just following the match-making tradition of the period. She felicitates a perfect marriage to be fundamentally a perfect friendship based on mutual understanding and affection. Her heroines marry for love though the heroes they marry are well settled except for Wentworth in *Persuasion* whose prosperity depends on the ensuing wars and their spoils.

The reason why marriage is so predominant in Jane Austen’s novels is because: “Marriage was the only career open to a woman; to remain single was to be branded as a failure, to be despised by other girls, patronised by married women, and ridiculed by men. Those who could not marry for love did so for a home of independence, companionship and children” (Kennedy 1969: 27). Margaret Kennedy further adds that only by the most severe self-discipline, by keeping her mouth shut, by constant attention to the comfort of other people, by sympathising, listening and running errands, could a spinster hope to preserve the respect of the community. To be thus laughed at and be ridiculed for being unmarried was every young lady’s dread and as such acquiring a husband was the priority.

Jane Austen’s novels are, in general, about young women who would acquire suitable partners before the dance is over, or every woman will face a bleak future of
being a governess, the only noble job open to an educated lady or be a maid to some noble man’s wife, and if not employed to be dependent on the mercy of some brothers or relatives. In an earnest quest for acquiring partners, we see the novelist’s portrayal of diverse relationships – the parents’ of the heroines and heroes (whose marriages lack the most essential elements of a compatible marriage), against those of the heroines and their heroes, who try to establish marriages with love, respect and friendship. How one determines the destiny of one’s future depends on how one chooses the life partner as pointed out subtly by Austen’s caricature of characters of different temperament. For many women they have to choose their husbands or else sometimes they are compelled by their parents to accept men selected for them. If it is a wrong choice, a wrong move, then a woman is doomed unlike man, who can make several choices in his life and find place in society through individual enterprises. For women, marriage is “the only means of social mobility, one of the few areas in which they could exercise choice, and the only means of determining their own identity in a society that denied them any effective autonomy” (Mukherjee 1995: 29). How they decide will determine their future and as such Jane Austen brings out different modes of relationships which are the results of such marriages.

Marriage based on physical attraction of youth and beauty which the older generation of Jane Austen’s novels has been following, does not guarantee lasting relationship. Beauty is only skin-deep and after the initial infatuation wanes, the relationship is soured by the discovery of their differences in character and temperament. Beauty and youth cannot withstand the onslaught of time as one grows old and is indifferent to outer beauty. Divorce was unheard of in an age of “propriety”, “class” and “status” conscious society of the time of Jane Austen’s British society. Snobbery and hypocrisy ruled the day of the aristocrats to which some of our protagonists’ parents belonged, and in keeping up their “name” they suffered immensely but never outrightly shown. How this in turn affected their children adversely will be shown in the following study. They will be discussed novel-wise in relation to both the parents’ and children’s choice of establishing relationship with their life-partners.
In the first place, it is *Pride and Prejudice* to which we draw our attention. Jane Austen calls this novel her “darling child” (Littlewood 2007: v) when it first came into print in 1813. The novel is the best model of “marriage of love” where Jane Austen explores the relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy to show how they gradually come to love and respect each other through a series of events, as against those marriages of Mr and Mrs Bennet, the heroine’s parents, based on physical attraction, Jane and Bingley’s is a combination of love and convenience, Charlotte and Collins’s is an example of economic security, and that of Lydia and Wickham both physical attraction and economic comfort.

The relationship of Mr Bennet and Mrs Bennet will be our foremost discussion to show how their unsuitable characters affect their children. Their relationship is one of the illustrative examples of having been married based on physical attraction. In the novel it has been unfolded that Mr Bennet has been “captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her” (201). Respect, esteem, and confidence, have vanished forever from their marital relationship and all his views of domestic happiness are overthrown. Their marriage is founded on physical beauty of a young lady and a young man of some fortune. Their external attraction bonds them for some time but after living together, they find their differences unamalgamated even after twenty-three years of marriage. Mrs Bennet has succeeded in using her youth and beauty to capture Mr Bennet in her early days. Being a woman of “mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper” (4), she cannot understand her husband. Mr and Mrs Bennet cannot create a perfect harmony in their married life. Even after the subsequent birth of five daughters, who grew up to be married off, they remain unable to understand one another. The incompatibility in their relationship has adversely affected the bringing up of their three younger daughters. The elder two daughters, Jane and Elizabeth, are fortunately above reproach due to their intelligence and common sense to maintain
propriety in society, and are beyond the unbridled rein of their mother’s silly supervision.

The universal truth “that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife” is so ardently held by Mrs Bennet that her preoccupation is towards the “marrying off” of her two elder daughters who have come of age. Both Jane and Elizabeth, unfortunately, have only beauty and youth but inconsiderable fortune as dowry. In an age where future comfort and security seem so important, Mrs Bennet is obsessed with seeing her daughters well-settled with good income. As such, any bachelor with fortune is an object to be conquered with feminine charms. She has conquered her man with her youth and charms and so expects the same of her daughters, though in reality, only Lydia, the youngest daughter, who takes after her, seems to comply with her design.

Mrs Bennet is vexed that Mr Bennet has not acquainted himself with Mr Bingley, a single man in possession of a good fortune who has taken Netherfield Estate for a lease in the neighbourhood. He has already done the customary visit to the new neighbour but has kept it from his family as his wife’s constant nagging arouses other feelings. When he reveals his visit, Mrs Bennet’s joy knows no bounds and praises him and is pleased that she has succeeded in persuading him to do her wishes. No amount of “coughing or vexing” would reduce her joy which otherwise would have an adverse effect on her “poor nerves”.

Mr and Mrs Bennet differ in their opinions regarding the whole development of things. Where there is difference in a family, the family falters, and nothing can narrow the gap. As such, the family suffers a set-back. Mrs Bennet encourages the younger daughters in their obsession with military officers which Mr Bennet disapproves but not strong enough to prevent them. Elizabeth voices her alarm regarding the youngest sister, Lydia’s venture and cautions her father to reprimand her: “If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment” (196).
Just as Elizabeth has feared, the news of Lydia’s elopement with Wickham brings a shocking realisation to both Mr and Mrs Bennet. Mr Bennet is rudely shaken from his stupor and goes in search of the couple but Mrs Bennet blames everyone except Lydia for the unfortunate event. Alistair Duckworth blames Mr Bennet as it is his “chosen freedom from social commitment and his withdrawal from the proper stage of his behaviour” (Duckworth 1974: 128), that leads to this scandal because he knows the shallow character of his wife and her foolish endeavours. At such moment, Elizabeth feels that her father has abilities to guide the daughters but he lacks the proper use of these talents which properly used in time could have saved the dignity of the family, of the daughters “even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife” (202). In his attempt to avoid confrontation with his nagging wife, Mr Bennet gives free hand to her to bring up the children, which he later laments. His reply to Elizabeth, about the outcome of his search for Lydia, echoes his irretrievable regret: “Say nothing of that. Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it” (248). Mr Bennet once out of his mood of sardonic teasing is forced into genuine suffering and self reproach. His mistake with Lydia cautions him to advise Elizabeth towards the end of the novel to consider her choice of husband when Darcy approaches him for her hand: “My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life” (315).When Elizabeth explains how much she appreciates and respects him for everything done for her and the family, only then is he pleased with the union.

Incompatibility in married life has its consequences. If Mr Bennet had exercised his parental sternness over his reckless youngest daughter when he was called upon, scandal of Lydia would have been averted. He totally abdicates his father-role. His finer qualities are inherited only by his elder two daughters to whom he should be indebted. Mrs Bennet cannot be altogether blamed for her actions. With such an indifferent husband, who does not seem to care for his children’s welfare with the problem of his entail looming large, her anxiety is justified, but for want of propriety, Austen portrays her as a comic character.

The father or the prospective husband to Jane Austen, in Lionel Trilling’s opinion, should be sound in economy to support his family and those who come
within his purview. He feels that the novelist finds Mr Bennet irresponsible because even as his estate is being entailed, “he has made no effort to secure his family against his death, and by reason of his otiosity he is impotent to protect his family’s good name from the consequences of Lydia’s escapade. He is represented as being not only less a man but also as less a gentleman than his brother-in-law Gardiner, who is in trade in London” (Trilling 1963: 130). Knowing the outcome of the entail and not ensuring any future arrangement is quite a contrast to another parent who wants to improve but does not live long enough to do so. Mr Henry Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility when his inherited property is handed down to “his son, and his son’s son” (324), all he could think of is to economise and save some amount to improve the improvised fortune of his family. He even requests his son to look after his step-mother and sisters on his death-bed. Such concern is seen lacking in Mr Bennet but is fortunate to have the elder two daughters married to two most eligible bachelors of the country with large fortunes.

The consequence of the marriage of the parents based on physical attraction has bad effects on the children. Jane Austen insists that love and respect are necessary for a happy marriage. This is true as all her novels end in marriages, after a long struggle of educating and reforming needed for the characters. The protagonists get married only after they get to love and respect each other with the approval of their parents. Parents’ approval is highly recommended even if the lovers have already pledged themselves to one another. Her strong belief in the love based marriage is also reflected in her real love-life as recorded by many critics of Jane Austen like Joan Rees, Lloyd Brown, John Halperin, Juliet McMaster, Robert Miles and Robert Irvine.

It might be probably around the year 1802 when Jane Austen, at the age of twenty-seven, received a marriage proposal from Harris Bigg-Wither. He was a promising young man of twenty-one and an heir to his father’s estate. Jane Austen was an intimate friend of Harris’s sisters, and when she accepted the proposal, it was of great joy to both the families. Just as her fictitious character, Elizabeth Bennet, Jane contemplated upon her acceptance and after a night’s sleepless wrestle, decided to break the engagement the very next morning. It was not thinkable to Miss Austen
to get herself involved in a loveless marriage as she did not love Harris. Her letter to her niece, Fanny Knight, which Lloyd Brown cites also endorses her ideal: “Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without Affection” (qtd. in Brown 1976: 29). She chose to remain single rather than be bound to someone for life without love or respect and be bored like some of her minor characters in the novel.

The marriage of Elizabeth and Darcy is the culmination of love, respect, understanding and a gradual development from hatred to admiration and love after a long process of overwhelming misunderstandings arising from pride and prejudice. Moreover the difference in their social status makes the two protagonists start off on a very wrong note right from their first encounter at Meryton Ball. The ball is considered important as: “The society described is one in which relationships, particularly those between men and women can have little opportunity for development save in the setting of the formal and semi-formal social occasion – the ball, the dinner-party or the morning visits” (Page 1972: 26). Unless acquaintances in these social events are formed, there is no way to have eligible young men or young ladies to meet or be introduced to each other and thereby elicit visits to their homes.

It is no fault of Darcy to oversee this opportunity as in his society everything is arranged for and taken care of by the parents. He only has to either pick a Miss Bingley or his cousin, Miss de Bourgh or any eligible young lady of his circle to marry. The aristocratic marriage is “based on the system of primogeniture, in turn supported through alliances ‘arranged’, or at least sanctioned, by the family” (Miles 2003: 121). Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy’s aunt, has in fact already arranged his marriage with her daughter from childhood. Her declaration to Elizabeth that: “My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. . . Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses” (298), is a clear sounding message of an aristocratic aunt to a gentry, to stay away from Darcy.
Mr Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien; and the report which was in circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year... and he was looked at for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company... and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend. (12)

Darcy’s popularity soon gives way because of his fine-upbringing as an aristocratic landlord as he was taught “to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond [his] family circle, and to think meanly of all the rest of the world” (308), which he confessed at the end of the novel to Elizabeth for his earlier attitude. His refusal to be introduced to any lady or to talk to any of the principled people in the room is therefore severely criticised. “In the social world of this novel, where the characters belong to a leisured class, talk is a major occupation... and the ability to talk – to anyone, about anything, or nothing – becomes highly prized” (Page 1972: 25). Darcy’s lack of interest to participate or to talk to anyone in the local ball is taken as an insult to the gentry class and so he is considered as the “proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again” (12). The society maintains high value of propriety which cannot be
compromised and as such Darcy’s character is severely attacked in spite of his handsome mien and large property, which is earlier highly esteemed by the community.

Not only does Darcy antagonise the society in general, but he mortifies the most spirited member of the assembly in particular, whom he at random refuses to be acquainted with. He passes a silly remark within reach of the person concerned. The person is none other than our heroine, Elizabeth, who happens to sit down two dances due to scarcity of men and within hearing distance when Bingley asks Darcy to dance with her. Darcy’s sarcastic reply: “She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men” (13). What a big blow to all the anticipation of a young lady looking forward to be acquainted with new gentlemen when she overhears this remark. She is crestfallen. It is no wonder that Elizabeth should have no cordial feeling towards him. With her lively, playful disposition, the news is soon spread and when it reaches the other congregation, Darcy’s already defamed personality is severely under attack. It is an unforgiveable crime to insult the beauty of Mrs Bennet’s daughters as they are her valuable merchandise, ready to be picked by any eligible gentlemen with fortune. Darcy’s reserved attitude and his inability to converse with strangers is therefore, to Mrs Bennet, a serious blemish.

Wickham is one character who brings discord to the already strained relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy. With his “agreeable manner” in which he can easily converse, and his charming demeanour, Wickham makes allegations against Darcy which easily convinces Elizabeth. He appears in the story “just as Elizabeth, smarting from Darcy’s disapprobation, willingly abrogates her critical faculties in favour of a pleasant countenance and manners” (Wright 1962: 125). His cordial attitude, in contrast to Darcy’s rudeness and indifference towards her, blinds her sense of perception and she is all ears to his woes. It is Wickham’s “adroitness that transforms curiosity into sympathy” and Elizabeth’s up-bringing “among the small mysteries and intrigues of Mrs Bennet’s world”, that is responsible for her to be “flattered into sympathy by his relation of his own history . . . or would criticise him for telling or herself for listening to such a private history” (Lascelles 1961: 160-61).
She is ready to believe anything against the defamation of Darcy and be an ally with anyone against him.

Meanwhile, Darcy’s mind changes as he realises Elizabeth’s mien and who in his esteem grows from being “tolerable” into becoming “admiration” as well as “attractive”. Her unselfish nature and disregard of decorum when she comes to Netherfield to care for her sick sister, instead of being repulsive as does the Bingley sisters, only makes him admire her for the daring feat. In her endeavour to reach her sister soon, she disregards all mode of propriety and goes alone three miles in the most unladylike way by “crossing field after field at a quick pace, jumping over stiles and springing over puddles with impatient activity, and finding herself at last within view of the house, with weary ankles, dirty stockings, and a face glowing with the warmth of exercise” (30). She thus presents herself into the breakfast parlour with dirty stockings and “petticoat, six feet deep in mud” (32). The more he sees of her nonchalant attitude, the more he is attracted to her. Of this new development, Elizabeth is perfectly unaware! To her as he is only a man who refuses to dance with her. Her repeated resistance to dance with him has not injured her. In fact Andrew Wright comments that: “the heroine by behaving disdainfully to him does just what is necessary to captivate him. Thus at Sir William Lucas’s party, her refusal to dance with him only sets him to thinking of her attractiveness” (Wright 1962: 123). Prejudiced as she is against Darcy, whatever he does to draw closer to her, is taken as something wrong in her to be criticised and so Elizabeth does not know of his change of heart.

Fearing that Elizabeth has taken hold of his emotion and desiring no more intimation with her due to her poor connection, Darcy decides to avoid her. Removal of Bingley from Netherfield to disrupt his imprudent marriage with Jane is not the only reason. In severing all connection of Bingley with Jane, even when she is in London, seems to be done deliberately as their relationship would draw him naturally to Elizabeth. This would be the reason why he contrives with Caroline to avoid any contact of the innocent victims. Distance, avoidance or social status cannot stop the heart from loving a person whom he has already fallen for. Not being able to content his emotion anymore, Darcy proposes to Elizabeth at
Hunsford. She has come to visit Charlotte and Collins at the vicarage. Coincidentally, Darcy with Fitzwilliam has also come to visit their aunt at the same time. Her earlier suspicion of Darcy’s role is estranging her sister Jane from Bingley is confirmed when Fitzwilliam accidentally mentions the role of Darcy in saving a friend from an imprudent marriage recently. The confirmation is so painful that she cries bitterly, developing a headache which prevents her from accompanying her party to Rosings, (Lady Catherine’s residence), that evening. On the other side, when Darcy learns of her sickness, he rushes to the parsonage to enquire of her health. Poor Darcy! Without any inkling that he is the cause of her sickness has to choose this very moment to bare his heart to Elizabeth. Not being in the habit of making a flowery speech, Darcy after much pacing and agitation, at last declares his feelings to Elizabeth in the most unromantic way:

‘In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.’

Elizabeth’s astonishment was beyond expression. She stared, coloured, doubted, and was silent. This he considered sufficient encouragement, and the avowal of all that he felt for her, immediately followed. . . . His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation – of the family obstacles which judgement had always opposed to inclination . . . (161-163)

The proposal of Darcy is so unexpected that it stuns Elizabeth into momentary silence. Her pride might have been gratified by receiving compliments from such a man of his status but for the very mention of the family’s inferiority. It reminds her of his interference in Bingley and Jane’s affair. Moreover his confident expectation of her consent makes her all the more angry. “He concluded with representing to her the strength of that attachment which, in spite of all his endeavours, he had found impossible to by her acceptance conquer; and with expressing his hope that it would now be rewarded of his hand” (163). Contrary to his expectation, when Elizabeth rejects him, Darcy finds it hard to believe it. This, to Karl Kroeber in “Pride and Prejudice: Fiction’s lasting novelty”, is “a revelatory shock to a male protagonist . . . who must learn that possessions of the owner of Pemberley are insufficient to overcome the repulsiveness of a Mr Darcy too confident of their potency” (Kroeber
1975: 149). When he therefore insists on reasons for her refusal, she alleges his role in the separation of Jane and Bingley, the disposition of Wickham, and his disfavour with the inferiority of her family. She is as proud of her gentry as he is of his aristocracy. On further pressing, she retorts that she might have responded differently if he “had behaved in a more gentleman-like manner” but his arrogance, conceit, and selfish disdain of others’ feelings make her feel that he would be “the last man in the world whom [she] could ever be prevailed on to marry” (166). In anger she has said things which she may have to regret later. The last allegation startles him and he leaves after wishing her good health and happiness. This provokes him to self-examination and reforms himself to become the kind of gentleman that Elizabeth would accept as her life-partner in the end.

Darcy’s letter of explanation brings to light all Elizabeth’s misapprehensions, the next day. In Darrel Mansel’s opinion, the letter reveals Darcy’s own character. He says: “Darcy’s letter giving an account of Wickham’s true character is therefore also a revelation of his own” (Mansel 1972: 87). What he could not say in person is done in letter. He gives explanation to all her allegations in detail, even disclosing his family secret where Wickham has tried to elope with his minor sister. Reading the letter makes her realise how foolishly she has behaved and grow ashamed of herself:

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 blameless distrust. – How humiliating is this discovery! . . . 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 knew myself. (177)

The love affair starts to blossom at Pemberley when Elizabeth, accompanying her uncle and aunty, Mr and Mrs Gardiner on a tour, meets Darcy suddenly. The Darcy she meets at Pemberley now is totally different from the one who proposed to her at
Humbled by her rejection of his marriage proposal, Darcy has altered his conduct towards her and become a perfect gentleman. This courteous behaviour both illustrates and compels the growth of her estimation of her” (SparkNotes Editors 2007: Web). Elizabeth is spellbound when he takes time to acquaint himself with her relatives and even introduces his sister, Georgiana to her. She starts to see the other side of his character which is never shown earlier. They are meeting for the first time in “favourable even flattering circumstances: he is at his best on his estate . . . and she among congenial companions” (Lascelles 1961: 163). Far from all the unfavourable influences which mar their relationship, they see each other in their true colours. Darcy is confident and at ease in his own domain and is therefore hospitable to Elizabeth and her relatives. Moreover, he has transformed drastically from his arrogant self to a humble gentleman who must learn to be amiable to his subordinates if he wants to win his beloved. Elizabeth too is pliant as her uncle and aunt are respectable and understanding people under whose company she is free from the prejudices of her mother’s intricacies.

What seems to be a good start is once again put to test by the news of Lydia’s elopement with Wickham. Elizabeth loses all hope of reconciliation with Darcy, whom she does not know has changed a lot during the period after her rejection. He blames himself for the scandal as Wickham’s true character is not revealed earlier to the Bennets. Darcy’s love for Elizabeth is demonstrated when he acts as a redeemer of the Bennets’ family honour. “With Lydia’s elopement, however, Darcy takes the final step: he risks the exposure of his own name and reputation by actively involving himself in retrieving the fallen reputation of the Bennets. Love is, of course, a major factor in Darcy’s decision to open his family name to the remarks of such a scandal, but love only provides the willingness, the impulse” (Sherry 1979: 621).

Darcy takes upon himself the task of finding the hide-out of the absconding lovers and bringing them to matrimonial alliance with rich settlement, without which Wickham would not marry Lydia. He does this as an obligation for his silence on Wickham which might have averted the scandal, but more so because he has come to love Elizabeth sincerely. When she comes to know of his part in Lydia’s hushed-
up marriage, she feels grateful. Austen portrays the change of Elizabeth’s heart as: “If gratitude and esteem are good foundation of affection, Elizabeth’s change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty” (232). She has long realised her love for Darcy and has feared the news of Lydia’s elopement would be the end of their newly founded friendship. She has been embittered at the sense of losing him.

Darcy’s next step to appease Elizabeth is to bring Bingley back to Netherfield. While Bingley goes on chatting and complimenting to Jane, during their visit to the Bennets, Darcy still retains his former attitude of remaining silent, so unlike his amiable self at Pemberley, where he and Elizabeth have resumed their acquaintance. This to Elizabeth is very disturbing as she does not know her stand with him. She knows his hand in Lydia’s marriage as well as in bringing Bingley back to Netherfield, yet the new attitude he adopts “astonished and vexed her”. Only when he has put right what he has ruined in his earlier snobbish self, does Darcy once again renew his proposal to her. “If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever” (306). Such endearing proposal cannot be objected by Elizabeth as she has been anticipating a second chance as she has realised that “he was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her” (259) long before he resumes his pursuit. Mr Bennet is soon applied to for her hand and though he consents he cautions his daughter against a loveless marriage. Mr Bennet’s only worry is that she might not be able to respect her partner, not knowing the recent development between the two lovers. It is typical of an adoring father’s concern for his doting daughter not to suffer like him in his marital disharmony. He would not want to give her away to any men but to Darcy whom he approves as well as respects. He is all the more happy when Elizabeth relates all what Darcy has done for the family.

In stark difference to this amiable union of love, we have the marriage of Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth’s friend, and Mr Collins which amounts to sheer economic security. Charlotte and Collins are a fine set of couple who enter marriage as the last resort to life’s accomplishment. There is no love, no regard, and no similarity of personality or idea. They have nothing in common to commend their
possible union, yet they marry for what the other partner can provide to fulfil the establishment of marriage. Collins is a distant cousin and an entail of Mr Bennet. He is a clergy by profession and has come to Longbourn to make amends for the entail due to him with some mode of compensation. Collins is “a caricature, climbing heavenwards in the clergy while aggrandising his little kingdom here on earth, and his god is Lady Catherine” (Mansell 1972: 83). He wants to marry one of his cousins of whose beauty he has heard long before he comes to their residence. Marriage is the compensation package that he is willing to offer his cousins for the loss of their father’s property. Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s wishes are his command to obey even to the minutest detail of choosing his mate. With such foolproof recommendation, he comes to the Bennets to acquaint himself as well as to claim his future estate right after the death of his father. When his first choice with Jane fails, he steers his direction to Elizabeth, who is second in birth and beauty within a short time when Mrs Bennet is “stirring the fire” (62). After Elizabeth rejects his proposal, it does not take Collins long to procure the hand of her intimate friend, Charlotte. The strangeness of making two proposals within three days is nothing in comparison with his being accepted by none other than her own friend. It only proves Elizabeth’s discernment of Collins’s hypocrisy of ever intending to marry one of the Bennet daughters. His proposal is sheer mechanical. So long as one meets the recommendation of his patron, he is willing to accept without much ado. In this regard he has found a perfect match in Charlotte.

Charlotte’s marriage to Collins is not the total loss of integrity that Elizabeth considers it, for it shows “her willingness to become part of society, to play a social part” (Duckworth 1974: 128). What she earlier intended as “useful engagement” to relieve Elizabeth of Collins’s unwanted advances, goes a step farther to engage her whole time in attendance to Collins groans and despair. The ploy works and she has Collins proposing her on the day of his departure from Hunsford. “She knows it is her last chance, and she takes it deliberately, weighing her future husband’s intolerable character against the security and social position he offers” (Daiches 1985: 752). Rather than remain a spinster with bleak future, Charlotte accepts Collins even if there is no love lost between them. She “deliberately marries a fool,
securing him within three days of the time he has been rejected by her friend” (Tave 1973: 10). With no beauty, fortune or any likelihood of another proposal, Charlotte does what she thinks is right and does it right as the marriage brings much relief to her family. No wonder Charlotte has to bear the consequence of her imprudent marriage with no marital bliss or congenial relationship with her husband. She is happy only when “Mr Collins could be forgotten . . . and by Charlotte’s evident enjoyment of it, Elizabeth supposed he must be often forgotten” (134).

Charlotte and Collins’s marriage is one of the most abhorring kinds of marriage alliances which Jane Austen has elaborately exposed to show to what extent some of the marriage-seekers would go to achieve their goals. Sacrifice of personal preference against economic security and social obligation is seen in the union of these two characters. Charlotte chooses to marry Collins much against his obnoxious personality for the security he offers while he does so she fulfils the qualities of his patroness’ recommendation. As long as one meets the need of one’s wish, anything can be compromised. Charlotte finds a husband in Collins and he a wife to please his patroness; love or respect has nothing to do in their union.

The relationship of Jane and Bingley is a perfect blend of personalities and the most coveted of the society. They fit the traditional concept of a young pretty lady who marries a rich eligible gentleman with a large fortune. What distinguishes them from the general concept is that they fall for each other without any doubts, hesitation or consideration of social or material gain. They are attracted to each other instantly at first meeting at the ball through mutual understanding and similarity of personalities. In fact their relationship is very different from that of Elizabeth and Darcy. Both are docile and despite their love for each other, they cannot assert nor denounce their relationship and as such they are not as attractive a couple as that of the friend’s or sister’s, whose relation goes topsy-turvy yet stable in the long run. Their marriage is a combination of love and convenience.

Jane is the eldest daughter of the Bennets and regarded as the “regular beauty” of the family. She has great strength of feeling and a steady mildness which allows her to think good of everyone. Bingley is a rich owner of Netherfield and has
been regarded as the rightful property of the Bennet right from the moment he occupies Netherfield by Mrs Bennet. Her expectation of seeing her daughters picked by the eligible rich bachelors at the Meryton Ball succeeds only with her eldest daughter, Jane. Mr Bingley has asked her twice to dance even when shortage of men has dismayed the young ladies at the party. He is good looking with pleasant countenance and unaffected manners. In spite of great opposition of character, he is very close to Darcy. The novelist comments that he relies on the strength of Darcy’s regard for anything he undertakes and Elizabeth sees this as truth when she says that “Bingley never stirs without him” (120). Like Jane, he is perfectly uncritical and is all obliging to whatever Darcy or his sisters want him to do. At Darcy’s initiative he has taken lease of Netherfield, left it in order to escape, what Darcy thinks as imprudent marriage with Jane, comes back and reclaim both the house and the hand of his beloved through his initiation. He seems to be dancing to the tune of his friend’s music but the most notable thing about his character is his persevering love for Jane. Jane too is steadfast in her love for him as she never once harbours any reproach or resentment when he leaves without any reason after showing so much care during her sickness at Netherfield.

In Jane and Bingley’s relationship, we see a balanced combination of love and fortune. They have strong affection to withstand any hardship which a long gap of seven months of uncertainty can alter. No forces could separate the love of these two amiable persons. They seem subordinate to others’ dictates but why they do so are to avoid animosity and discontentment and as such cannot be regarded as less superiors. Mr Bennet’s comment to Jane right after he gives his consent to Bingley sums up their suitability of personality: “Your tempers are by no means unlike. You are each of you so complying, that nothing will ever be resolved on; so easy, that every servant will cheat on you; and so generous, that you will always exceed your income” (291). Their goodness would be always taken advantage of and so do the Wickhams in the novels by relying on them for any want of financial aids.

Another set of marriage which the young lovers seem to inherit from the older generation, is that of Wickham and Lydia, the youngest daughter of the Bennets. The marriage of Lydia and Wickham is the worst kind of marriage. Their
relationship is basically more of physical attraction of youth and beauty different from any of the marriages found in the novel. They are married forcibly by the intervention of Darcy. Lydia is just sixteen and is ambitious of getting married much before her elder sisters. She falls in love with Wickham without much consideration of future security. Mrs Bennet is much to be blamed for Lydia’s conduct: “Lydia’s real failure is a lack of the fortitude necessary to forming one’s own identity; instead she is resistlessly submerged by the power of mutual identification with her mother” (Brown 1979: 9). She takes after her mother’s passion with “red coat” and so does not restrain her in her pursuit of the militia. Mrs Bennet in fact encourages her to follow the regiment (to which Wickham belongs) transferred to Brighton in contrast to her husband’s restraint on the younger daughters. She reaps the reward of her encouragement when her favourite daughter elopes with Wickham much to the disdain and shame of the family, risking the chances of the four elder daughters’ future.

Wickham is a handsome rake who can dazzle women with a fine personality as long as they hold his interest and can easily divert the moment his interest is engaged elsewhere. He is: “the most plausible and most villainous of Jane Austen’s anti-heroes: he is handsome, persuasive, personal, disingenuous, calculating, and dishonourable” (Wright 1962: 125). He has charmed Elizabeth with his handsome and pleasing countenance, misleading her with false report of Darcy. He then shift his attention from Elizabeth to an heiress, Miss King with ten thousand pounds besides his earlier attempt to abduct Miss Darcy for her fortune, which Elizabeth knows much later from Darcy’s letter. The dark side of the fortune-hunter nature known to the elder two Bennet sisters is kept undisclosed as Wickham would soon be leaving the vicinity and so there is no need to defame his character. In preserving his reputation, they only ended up bringing misfortune on themselves. He elopes with their youngest sister, Lydia.

The marriage of Lydia and Wickham is purely a result of infatuation, passion of youth that cannot last long as: “There is no scope for the flourishing of romantic love as it creates problem for cordial family relationships. A happy marriage requires is a specific type of love – well-directed, intelligent, balanced and
reciprocal” (Dhatwalia 1988: 87). This type of happy married life is totally missing in the young couple’s life. The novelist states Wickham’s affection for Lydia has “soon sunk into indifference” while “hers lasted a little longer” (324) and because of their extravagance, they have to depend on the benevolence of their two sisters’ families which in long run has created an uncongenial atmosphere whenever their presence is made.

In her endeavour to elaborate the different marriages, Jane Austen seems to be cautioning the younger generation of the danger of imprudent marriage. The incompatibility of her parents is reflected in Elizabeth’s thoughts when she sees “that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible . . . the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage” (202). As no love or affection is lost between the parents, the father though a wise man, does not want to overlook or compensate the want in his wife’s character, which married couple are supposed to do. Mr Bennet is a “frightening exemplar of the perils of detachment” and “a terrible father” (Halperin 1984: 73). He could be a warning to the young men not to be like him in his choice of a life-partner or role of a father to his children.
Works Cited


(ii) *Sense and Sensibility*

The next novel to be discussed is *Sense and Sensibility*, published in 1811. It was the first published novel that brought Jane Austen’s fame though she was still writing in anonymity. It lacks the sparkle or the witty verbal exchange of the protagonists of *Pride and Prejudice*. Conversation between the protagonists is almost non-existence and much is communicated through the mind or the narration of the author. It is also longer than any of her other novels. The novel, besides the exploration of the strong bond of Elinor and Edward’s love, seems to reveal the novelist’s concern about the traditional practice of inheritance as well as the rigid maintenance of propriety or decorum of the society of her time. Nowhere is she as explicit about her concern as she is in this novel through the character of the heroine, Elinor and her endurance of the injustice meted out to her.

The novel also is an entirely different world from the other novels of Jane Austen. It is a matriarchal world where mothers rule in the absence of living fathers. We have two widows in the novel who are single parents to our heroine, Elinor and hero, Edward in relation to the primogeniture system which does not allow women to inherit property except when they become widows of rich gentlemen whose children are yet to come of age. Mrs Dashwood is left destitute while Mrs Ferrars is amply provided for according to their respective husbands’ resources. They are widows with different destiny within the existing tradition. How they supervise and exercise their power over their children would be dealt with differently according to their personality and temperament.

In this chapter, exploring the relationship of the parents of the protagonists would be our first task as to show in what way their supervision brings about the nature of their children. How the influence of their supervision reflects on the children’s relationships to their life-partners will be discussed in the marriages of Elinor and Edward, Marianne and Colonel Brandon, John and Fanny Dashwood, Lucy and Robert, Mr and Mrs Middleton and Mr and Mrs Palmer.
Mr and Mrs Dashwood are the parents of the heroine, Elinor. They were married in younger days out of infatuation as well as genuine love but without sound income to live comfortably well. They have moved to Norland Park, a large estate with rich resources, when Mr Henry Dashwood has inherited the estate from his distant uncle who had no issue. They have three grown up daughters but no son. Mr Dashwood, however has a son, John Dashwood from his previous marriage who is quite wealthy from both his late mother’s as well as from his wife’s dowries. When the Old Dashwood died and his will is read out, the estate is bequeathed to Mr Dashwood’s son’s son Harry, a young boy of four years and nothing for the ladies – the three daughters and his wife. In order to prevent his family from utter poverty, Mr Dashwood has requested his son John to look after his step-mother and sisters as his plan to enhance the family income could not be fulfilled due to his poor health. Unfortunately, he has outlived his predecessor by only one year.

Mrs Dashwood is a romantic woman given more to emotion than to reason in taste and temperament. When their home is seized by her step-son and daughter-in-law, Fanny, she joins her second daughter Marianne in grief. “They encourage each other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief which empowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again” (326). Instead of comforting and consoling her daughters she adds more to the grief by reflecting upon the good times they had spent at the estate as well as on the humiliation inflicted on them by Fanny, so much so that they cannot resolve against any future consolation. As a responsible parent she cannot act diplomatically either with her step-son upon whom the whole state of her daughters’ future for material as well as economic security depends. She cannot also accept the fact that Fanny has become the new mistress of Norland Park according to the “will” and tradition besides the ungraceful manner in which the latter has ousted her and the daughters. The fact that she being a second wife of Mr Henry Dashwood, and not the natural mother of John, is another factor why she has no legal right over the estate.

Unlike the contemporary mothers who would look out for rich gentlemen for their pretty daughters in marriage, Mrs Dashwood seems to be quite indifferent to her daughters’ wealthy suitors, Edward and Willoughby are two prospective
gentlemen interested in her two elder daughters. Her eldest daughter, Elinor is courted by Edward, the brother of Fanny. The novelist describes her as: “Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who died very rich; and some might have repressed it from motive of prudence, for except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother” (333). The fortune of Edward is not so important to Mrs Dashwood as long as he loves her daughter Elinor and she reciprocates it. Like a true romantic, she believes that difference of fortune should not separate any couple in love. Another score of approval of Edward is that he is “unlike Fanny” (334). In trying to show her approval of Edward, she in fact embarrasses him when she invites him directly with “great affection” to visit them at Barton in front of his sister, thus putting him in an awkward position as his family disapproves of his attachment to Elinor. Jane Austen gives a very realistic view of women rivalry between the in-laws in the Dashwood household. Fanny has never been a favourite with any of her husband’s family, whom she treats as “half blood” (327) and has taken the opportunity of avenging them at the most precarious moment (within the mourning period of their father’s demise) which to Mrs Dashwood is very insulting as well as inhuman in the eyes of the society.

Mrs Dashwood’s approval of Willoughby, another suitor of her second daughter Marianne, stems from his gallant act of rescuing her when she has sprained her leg. “Had he been even old, ugly, and vulgar, the gratitude and kindness of Mrs Dashwood would have been secured by any act of attention to her child; but the influence of youth, beauty, and elegance, gave an interest to the action which came home to her feelings” (356). A benevolent heart, and not the residence at Allenham, which she later knows, recommends him to her immediately. To her the heart is more important than the head which when carried too far is dangerous. She encourages the blooming friendship between the two without any restraint so much so that Marianne fails miserably in her first romance. Had Mrs Dashwood checked her from the start, she might not have fallen headlong for the first man who fulfils her romantic fancy. Both mother and daughter learn their lesson the hard way as a
consequence of their unrealistic imagination, for Marianne almost died of depression when Willoughby jilted her for an heiress.

Mrs Dashwood is not a strong person mentally and quite shallow in her perception of things around her. She is described as “a matured and light-hearted version of Marianne . . . her only real mistake is to fail to exercise her proper authority over Marianne. Her foibles are attractive and confined to a few topics: carelessness about money, embarrassing and unconventional expression of kindness, and unrealistic plans for the future” (Craik 1968: 45). As well as the issue of economising their expenses gets curtailed by Elinor, she seems to be mindless of her new status in life. The horses and the carriage have been sold at Elinor’s advice and servants are limited to three in order to reduce their maintenance after the demise of her husband. Widowed and homeless with meagre income, she still has not come to term with her financial position. She raises no objection to the expense to be incurred by her elder two daughters in visiting London when invited by Mrs Jennings even as Elinor is contemplating on the very prudence of accompanying “a woman whose society can afford [them] pleasure, or whose protection will give [them] consequence” (446). Besides she feels that their mother should not be left alone being shortly removed from Norland. Mrs Dashwood, far from being gratified, urges them to leave her so that she can alter their rooms in their absence. London trip is encouraged in anticipation of Marianne meeting Willoughby. Oblivion to all the financial constraints she even plans to enlarge the cottage for more comfort, without any saving or means of forthcoming income. She is fantasying her own world of unreal future which is inherent in her favourite daughter, Marianne.

Only once does Mrs Dashwood voice out her discontent of her imprudent marriage when she reprimands Marianne for fearing that she might not find her romantic hero. She consoles her as: “Remember, my love, that you are not seventeen . . . . Why should you be less fortunate than your mother? In one circumstance only, my Marianne, may your destiny be different from me” (336). The “one circumstance” refers to the economic unreliability of her late husband whose entire income is only “seven thousand pounds” (324). Mrs Dashwood lacks nothing from her husband in terms of love, affection and concern except the basic needs of a
family —shelter and bank balance — which could not be met due to his poor resource. By now she realises that love alone is not enough to maintain a family and so wishes her daughter’s future to be different from that of hers in that area. Mrs Dashwood’s approval of Colonel Brandon for Marianne is therefore a reasonable choice. He is mature, kind and rich, helpful not only to them but even to their friend, Edward. Moreover he sincerely loves her daughter in spite of all the misadventures, thus deserving Marianne’s esteem and love which leads to marriage.

On the other hand, we have Mrs Ferrars, the mother of Edward who is another character of the old generation who seems to uphold the idea, that “beauty is a negotiable and variable factor . . . and can be compensated for by money” (Mukherjee 1995: 37). As a head of an aristocratic family, Mrs Ferrars wants to brandish Edward, her eldest son, as a prominent figure in society as an orator, a politician, a member of parliament, connected with some of the great men of the day, as well as to see him driving a barouche and marry an heiress to replenish his fortune. This is the customary of the aristocrats’ way of indulging the first son who would be inheriting the family legacy. Contrary to his mother’s aspiration, Edward has no turn to neither become great man or drive barouches nor want to marry an heiress but wishes for domestic comfort and the quietness of private life. Mother and son have different ambitions and so the clash of opinions arises leading to Edward’s indecisive and introvert nature. The mother’s strong hold on him renders him inactive.

The close relationship of parent-children is totally absent in the Ferrars’ household. Mrs Ferrars has no maternal affection but rules her children as a tyrant using carrot and stick method. She wants complete hold on their life style, profession and even the choice of a spouse. Seeing that Edward has no inclination in indulging in her wish, Mrs Ferrars wants him to marry a Miss Morton, an heiress to enhance his social connection as well as economic advancement. As per the tradition, Edward is entitled to everything his late father had left, by virtue of his birth. Yet Mrs Ferrars gives him no access to his birth-right. In order to make him marry Miss Morton, she baits him with the Norfolk estate, his rightful property which is clear of land-tax and if not, his own two thousand pounds would be the
only provision due to him and would be excommunicated. As an upright person, Edward chooses to be disowned rather than break his pledge to Lucy Steele. Mrs Ferrars therefore settles the estate upon Robert, the younger brother immediately, which is a gross violation of tradition. In the primogeniture system, the younger son inherits the family property only after the death of the eldest son. Indirectly, Mrs Ferrars is implying to Edward that he is no more her elder son. Ironically when Robert marries the same Lucy for whom Edward is disowned, he is not reprimanded nor his right reversed, thus proving her partiality to the younger son. Even after Robert marries Lucy, Edward is still asked to marry Miss Morton, as she is the daughter of a nobleman with thirty thousand pounds, while Elinor, whom he loves, is only the daughter of a private gentleman, with no more than three thousand. Mrs Ferrars puts monetary security as predominant factor in seeking her son’s marriage partner which amounts to nothing less a business settlement.

Mrs Ferrars, like General Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*, wants to run her family as a strong dictator. She abuses her motherly power and tries to control Edward psychologically, emotionally and financially but to no avail. She finally ends up consenting to Edward’s marriage to Elinor but does not assist beyond his due, which is the same as that of her daughter, Fanny’s share of two thousand pounds. Thus Edward is treated as a second son and reduced to a status of a daughter in his share of the family provision. The degradation is humiliating yet liberating as he is free from his mother’s tyranny to take up the profession he likes as well as marry the girl he loves. His mother strongly has objected to both his choice of profession and wife. The older generation like Mrs Ferrars considers money and status more important than love or affection and are not much concern for their children’s compatibility with their spouses and as such the children cannot lead perfect or harmonious married lives, except for Edward.

In the relationship of Elinor and Edward, we see how love demonstrates the unfailing loyalty of the lovers despite the many restrictions imposed on them to break their possible marriage. Difference in fortune and class is the reason why Edward and Elinor’s marriage is opposed by Mrs Ferrars. From the very beginning, Elinor is overshadowed with gloom as she has to safeguard her family from over-
indulgence of sensibility over the siege of their home. She also has to protect her
love for Edward against the intimidating mother. Elinor being the eldest daughter,
her mother Mrs Dashwood, depends on her advice and coolness of judgement. At
nineteen after the death of their father, she acts as the counsellor of her mother. She
has an excellent heart and is affectionate. Her feelings are strong but she knows how
to govern them, a knowledge which her mother has yet to learn, and her sisters have
to be taught. She is the only member of the family who knows how to uphold the
period’s sense of decorum and propriety even at the risk of losing the love of her
life.

The intimacy between Elinor and Edward starts at Norland. They have met
during Elinor’s very tiring period of mourning of her father and precarious situation
of being dislocated from their homestead when it is literary seized by her half-
brother, John and his wife Fanny. Edward has come to visit his sister Fanny during
this uncongenial atmosphere. Elinor plays a vital role in keeping the family intact
even when her brother and wife, occupy their estate immediately after their father’s
funeral causing much anguish to her mother, who wants to quit it instantly. She
manages to reason on the propriety of going so soon. While her mother and sisters
encourage each other in their affliction by seeking increase of wretchedness in every
reflection, Elinor, though deeply afflicted, manages to control her emotion and treats
her relatives well. “She could consult with her brother, could receive her sister-in-
law on her arrival, and treat her with proper attention: and could strive to rouse her
mother to similar exertion, and encourage her to similar forbearance” (327). In her
interaction with her relatives, she is acquainted with Edward with whom she shares a
great deal of similar interest. In no time, they develop intimacy which Fanny does
not approve and confronts her mother-in-law, Mrs Dashwood with the impropriety
of Elinor’s attachment to Edward. She also conveys their mother Mrs Ferrars’s high
expectation of Edward being connected with family of higher social status. This
hastens Mrs Dashwood to take a decision to move instantly to Barton Cottage
offered by a distant relative of hers, Sir John Middleton at Devonshire.

Elinor pays a heavy price for loving Edward. She is rejected by none other
than her own sister-in-law and her mother, Mrs Ferrars. To add to the wound is the
inhibited nature of her beau, Edward. He is the eldest son of a rich man whose fortune depends on the “will of his mother” (333). To the Dashwood ladies, he is not recommended as an attractive gentleman as he is not handsome, lacking intimacy to make his manner pleasing but on close acquaintance he is open and affectionate. His understanding is good as his education has given it solid improvement but the dictatorial expectation of his mother and sister has pushed him to appear subversive as he is not inclined to their wishes.

Elinor loves and recognises the inner beauty of Edward’s personality as they have been thrown a great deal together. She admires the intellect and understanding of a man more than the outer appearance which can be deceptive. She understands his sentiments, his taste and enjoyment of literature and knows him better than her family members. She admits that he is certainly not striking at first sight but is really amiable on closer acquaintance. Edward may not meet the romantic description of Marianne and her mother’s hero but to Elinor, he is handsome. “Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” and as such, Edward is the perfect gentleman who appeals to Elinor. They have common interest and enjoy each other’s company which is the basic foundation of a lasting friendship. They are discreet in their preference for each other, not flaunting their love and risking unwanted speculations from the elders as does the younger sister, Marianne. Only the Ferrars, being too cautious of Edward’s future security and keeping close watch on him, recognise his affinity towards Elinor. They would ward off any sign of distraction from a pre-planned marriage set for him and as such Elinor is victimised lest she swayed him from it. The virtual eviction from Norland is therefore part of estranging the young lovers from developing further intimacy. What seems to be the end of a blossoming affair after the move from Norland is resumed at Barton Cottage, when he visits them.

Edward’s love for Elinor takes him to Barton Cottage after a month’s gap since their removal from Norland. His weeklong stay at the cottage is not clear at all to Elinor. He seems to enjoy her company and is affectionate towards her family by showing his interest in their welfare but nothing is made clear to Elinor of his affection. He has several attractive exchanges with the whole family discussing various intimate subjects regarding his own future career, the amount of money
needed to live in comfort, and each other’s personal views. He expresses that he has “no wish to be distinguished . . . cannot be forced into genius and eloquence” (395) as his mother or sister has wished for him. They want him, as the eldest son, to make a fine figure in the world while his own inclination has always been the “church”, the clergy profession which is not smart enough for his family. They recommend that he should join the army, law or the navy, which to him are not his calling. Edward even goes to the extent of asserting that his children would be brought up “to be as unlike myself as is possible – in feeling, in action, in condition, in everything” (405), thus revealing the distaste of his tyrannical up-bringing by his mother. A man dares to share his confidential matter only to his close friends whom he can trust. He could discuss even monetary benefits with the Dashwood ladies on which to live comfortably and also teases Marianne about her favourite maxim “that no one can ever be in love more than once in their life” (397). His congenial attitude proves that he is dear to them because of his closeness to Elinor. What then prevents him to declare his love to Elinor is confusing not only to her but to the whole family.

Edward’s inhibition is to some extent understood by Elinor. She presumably blames his mother for his present disposition. “The old well-established grievance of duty against will, parent against child, was the cause of all” (404). Elinor has attributed Edward’s indecisive attitude to be result of his mother’s strong hold on him. She presumes that his silence so far is due to his mother’s objection. She is just contented presuming that the hair wound round his finger is hers and is therefore a “flattering proof” of his love, which later on would make her “mortified, shocked, confounded” (431) when she realises that it is Lucy’s hair given as gift in lieu of a portrait. Edward is never seen giving an assertive answer to any of the queries made. He would simply murmur or utter unintelligible words which is often misinterpreted. His inactive personality is because of his precarious situation: “he cannot court Elinor, and he cannot jilt Lucy, and even his resistance to his mother consists in not marrying Miss Morton, and in not giving up Lucy. A man situated between two women as he is situated between Lucy and Elinor can hardly avoid looking ineffectual, if not ridiculous” (Craik 1968: 42). His early engagement, long before he meets Elinor, has made him depressed as he cannot break his pledge to Lucy. He
neither can marry the one chosen by his mother as he is already in love with Elinor. A man in such a fix can hardly be expected to appear lively. Elinor, being in the dark of all his anguish, still loves him as she is confident of his affection. Despite her disappointed that he has not yet declared his love for her, she treats him as “he ought to be treated from the family connection” (349) and thus avoid any appearance of resentment or displeasure to him or to her family. Elinor is a perfect embodiment of the period’s sentiment and propriety.

Elinor’s love is put to the test when she comes to know of his secret engagement with Lucy Steele. She learns about it when the Steele sisters come to visit the Middletons at Devonshire. Lucy discloses to Elinor that she has been secretly engaged to Edward for the last four years. The news shatters Elinor’s hope yet she promises not to reveal the secret as it would mean disinheritance for Edward if his mother disapproves of their union. In despair she ponders over the news of the engagement to herself:

Had Edward been intentionally deceiving her? Had he feigned a regard for her which he did not feel? Was his engagement to Lucy an engagement of the heart? No; whatever it might once have been, she could not believe it such at present. His affection was all her own. She could not be deceived in that. Her mother, sisters, Fanny, all had been conscious of his regard for her at Norland; it was not an illusion! He certainly loved her. (432)

Elinor’s searching heart is confident of her love for Edward. Despite the momentary doubt of his sincerity, her regard of him does not decrease even after she knows of his engagement for she is still confident of his love and affection. She knows him too well to distrust his sincerity and holds fast to her belief even when all seems to be hopeless. Her discerning mind can see the unsuitability of Lucy for a simple minded Edward. She can also presume his change of mind towards Lucy over the years as he would not behave affectionately towards her if his regard for Lucy has not waned. The very fact that Lucy has known all about her and her family by description even before they meet, is in itself the proof of Edward’s high regard of her and her family. He must have spoken of her constantly to Lucy who naturally suspects his preference for her and is therefore jealous of her so as to reveal the
secret engagement which, till that time, has not been declared. Lucy is in fact warning her of her possession. Interestingly, Lucy is the second person after Fanny to warn Elinor to keep away from Edward.

Elinor cannot wholly dispel her hope of Edward’s love for her. She attributes the engagement to his youthful infatuation which must have bound him to Lucy. If he should marry Lucy, instead of herself, how much would he suffer at the hands of his family as she is “undoubtedly inferior in connections, and probably inferior in fortune to herself. . . . As these considerations occurred to her in painful succession, she wept for him more than for herself” (433). Edward’s unsaid thoughts are discerned by Elinor’s quiet heart and it proves true in the end. She laments his fate knowing he would never be happy with Lucy, whom she has lately come to know as vulgar, artful and selfish. Although Elinor’s sense of security has sunk, yet her love for Edward is steadfast. She keeps her promise of secrecy of the engagement and in doing so she lands into various unpleasant encounters with his sister, Fanny and his mother, Mrs Ferrars. She keeps it even from her family and so conceals her grief although she is beset with sorrow.

On her adherence to keep the secret, Karl Kroeber in his book, *Styles in Fictional Structure*, is of the opinion that: “Elinor’s concealment of her feelings is, of course, in part self-protection. But it is more than that. It is the protection of Edward and even Lucy and the complicated truth of Elinor and Edward’s relation, which would be distorted by the over-simplifications of Marianne’s and Mrs. Dashwood’s uncontrolled emotionality” (Kroeber 1971: 66). She keeps the secret for four months which she reveals to Marianne only when he is free to address her. In keeping the secret, she is also preserving her secret love for Edward as he has never declared it. Yet she believes that he loves her in his heart of hearts. If her family knows of his engagement, they might either condemn Edward or pity her, as they believe that he loves her. This belief might go overboard as they love to give way to passion easily, and that is something which Elinor does not want either for him or herself. Another reason is that, she fears, Edward might be disinherited should he marry outside his mother’s wish, as she knows that she wants him to marry a rich heiress.
Elinor and Edward meet again after she knows of his engagement in London at Mrs Jennings. As soon as Edward learns of Elinor’s presence in town, he comes to visit her. Unfortunately, Lucy too has come to visit Elinor that same day. Seeing Lucy at such an unlikely place puts Edward in an awkward as well as embarrassed situation. How eagerly he has come to visit Elinor, and not she, his fiancée, is a clear proof of his preference for Elinor. It confirms Lucy’s suspicion of his coolness towards her of late! Elinor’s noble heart manages to welcome him and apologises for her absence when he has last come to visit them. “She would not allow the presence of Lucy, nor the consciousness of some justice towards herself, to deter her from saying that she was happy to see him. . . . She would not be frightened from paying him those attentions which, as a friend and almost a relation, were his due” (517). Elinor is not intimidated by what others would think of her attention given to Edward but does it as usual when they meet – that she is pleased to see him. In the presence of two ladies who are closely linked to him differently, he is at his wits end. He therefore leaves without much ado and Lucy is left to hurry home shortly afterwards.

What Elinor fears dearly for Edward takes place when the news of his secret engagement is exposed. Edward is disinherited by his mother due to his resolute to remain attached to Lucy, which means that he cannot marry immediately, thus giving some hope to Elinor of averting the marriage. But whatever hope she might have entertained is crushed when her friend Colonel Brandon comes to his rescue with an offer of a living at Delaford to Edward and she is assigned the commission to convey the message. Her astonishment is indeed dumbfounded. What is considered impossible just two days ago “was already provided to enable him to marry; and she, of all people in the world, was fixed on to bestow it!” (550-51). Not knowing that Elinor is at the worst end of all these complex love-triangles – Elinor-Edward-Lucy and Elinor-Edward-Morton – Brandon intervenes to relieve Edward as a good Samaritan but all for the wrong reasons. He is helping Elinor’s lover to marry Lucy as he does not know the real picture of the whole affair. Being a victim himself of such estrangement from his beloved by his father in younger days, he is quick to assist a young lover in his capacity. Despite the precarious situation she resolves
within herself to think differently and perform the noble task of passing Brandon’s offer to Edward as a useful friend. The misery of enhancing the state of her beloved to marry someone else must have been quite devastating yet she has to fulfil her part. She feels for Edward’s welfare more than for herself, thus proving her real selfless love.

Elinor and Edward’s love for each other is seen most vividly in the conveyance of Brandon’s message. Edward is surprised at Brandon’s offer as he is a total stranger to him. He presumes that Brandon must have a motive behind his good-will as he also is an eligible gentleman and becomes jealous of him not knowing that Brandon is interested in Marianne. Everything is done in such a discreet manner, that the readers too are at strain as to why Jane Austen employs so complex a style to create confusion and misunderstanding among the characters. She seems to do so to show the rigid code of decorum and propriety of the day where it is improper to pry into one’s personal affair. Unless officially declared, a couple’s love affair is kept under warp to avoid unnecessary scandal which is why Edward’s engagement to Lucy has been a secret as Mrs Ferrars’s approval has not been obtained till then. Edward feels he has no right to directly enquire of Elinor about Brandon as he too has been harbouring a secret engagement which he thinks Elinor does not know. He might not have wished to be dependent on a stranger’s charity yet he cannot refuse the offer as he needs it to live upon it for the sometime. Under such circumstance, they have to remain in delusion for some time with much pain and mental sorrow. They both part with the sad thoughts that when they meet again next, they would meet as somebody else’s spouses. The unspoken thoughts of these protagonists are in itself the proof of their sincere love for each other which cannot be revealed as they are bound by their personal commitments. Such endearing thoughts cannot be unrewarded. Both Elinor and Edward are good disciples of their period’s adherence to strict propriety - Elinor in respecting a confidence and Edward in keeping a promise. They can content their emotions so well that both Brandon and Mrs Jennings, their hostess who prided herself at catching even the slightest trace of romance, cannot detect their affinity towards each other. Only Lucy could perceive their secret love as Edward’s affection for her has cooled down.
Contrary to what is expected by his good fortune, Edward is not much excited about the new development. His good fortune means his own disappointment. “When Colonel Brandon presents him with a living, he reacts not by visiting his new parishioners but by worrying because he can now afford to get married, which unhappily means marrying Lucy Steele” (Butler 1986: 203). Edward has offered to break off his engagement to Lucy, basing on his disinheritance but not strong enough to frankly confess his change of mind. She plays to his tune and declines to part saying “she could live with him upon a trifle, and how little soever he might have, she should be very glad to have it all” (543). Brandon’s offer comes as Edward is just waiting for any new calling and to eventually marry Lucy, as he could not end the engagement. Therefore instead of rejoicing Edward is rather sad at the sudden turn of events. Lucy’s implied modesty tortures him for sometime not knowing that she is just bidding time to leave him.

What seems to be the end of the love affair of Elinor and Edward is just about to bloom with the result of Edward’s disinheritance. The disappointment of Elinor and Edward is reversed as soon as the message of Brandon’s offer of living is being delivered and accepted. The outcome proves just the contrast. Lucy, instead of rejoicing at Edward’s fidelity and new source of income, simply changes her mind and marries the wealthier brother, Robert. She also deliberately sends message of her marriage to Mr Ferrars, not directly mentioning Robert, through the servant to mislead the Dashwood ladies unnecessarily for a while, causing much anguish to the Dashwood ladies. This leads to the embarrassing situation when Edward rushes to Elinor to profess his love as soon as his engagement is called off. When the ladies enquire of Mrs Ferrars, his assumed wife, he has responded in relation to his mother. Only when Elinor specifies her as Mrs Edward Ferrars, does Edward realise the mistake of his response.

Edward cannot express his love to Elinor immediately as he is introvert and not spontaneous by nature. The furore created by Lucy’s sly message has done much harm to his already heady emotion. In the confusion of this mistaken situation, he walks towards the windows, apparently from not knowing what to do. He then takes up a pair of scissors and starts cutting the sheath to pieces. After what seems like
century to the ladies he hurriedly says: “Perhaps you do not know – you may not have heard that my brother is lately married to . . . Miss Lucy Steele”’ (615). Not being used to explaining himself, due to his aristocratic upbringing, and also not having the knack of easy speech, Edward for sometime is at a loss when he is bombarded with queries which are not in the least connected to his present pursuit. Edward’s action is a revelation of his “nervousness and resolution by an unconscious act. . . . There are times when the scissors will destroy the sheath just as when there are times when the sheath will contain the scissors. Edward’s feelings can break from the sheath at this point to some purpose because he is directing them towards marriage” (Tanner 1986: 87). Tony Tanner compares the “sheath” to the society that forces the individuals to suppress their emotion. Edward, in cutting the sheath, seems to be unconsciously shredding all fetters that have bound him from proposing Elinor, and is now opening his love to Elinor. His love has been kept suppressed due to his earlier engagement as well as the restrictions laid on him by his mother. Only when all the obstructions on his side are removed, does Edward muster up his courage to propose to Elinor. She, no doubt agrees to marry him eventually after Edward is reconciled to his mother who unwillingly consents to his marriage.

The marriage of Elinor and Edward is of real genuine love and respect. Edward finds a suitable companion in Elinor as they share a common interest from the start. His preference for clergy is wholly approved by her alone while his mother, sister or his former fiancé do not approved at all. He foregoes inheritance, wealth, fame and position to marry her. Elinor too on her part has to bear up humiliation for her low connection and fortune at the hands of her in-laws and yet could still persevere in her love for Edward against all odds. They deserve one another and their marriage is one of the most exemplary unions of love that embodies Jane Austen’s ideal marriage. Their marriage unites the “private emotional sensibility of the love-match with the good sense that deals realistically with the externally imposed rules of the social order” (Brown 1976: 33).

The marriage of Marianne, the sister of Elinor, and Colonel Brandon is also one of love and understanding. She however, in contrast to her sister, has to suffer
great dis-appointment in love because of her earlier romantic fantasy before she marries Brandon. She falls for the first man who comes to her rescue when she is in distress – a sprained leg from a fall. Willoughby, on a hunting-spree, perchance to see Marianne in that state and so carries her home. By doing so, he has created for himself a fine figure of gallantry besides his handsome and graceful manner to the Dashwood ladies. He personifies Marianne’s fancy of the hero of her favourite story “in his carrying her into the house with so little previous formality”, and dressed in “a shooting-jacket was the most becoming. Her imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a sprained ankle was disregarded” (356). They are attracted to one another and on friendly term right from the first day of their acquaintance. However, not all Prince Charmings are good as in fairy tales, for there are some who come in disguise as Swarup Singh opines in the following lines:

This Prince Charming, however, is proved a thorough-going villain. Marianne is, of course, completely dazzled and overwhelmed by him but . . . he is a man without conscience and can easily deceive innocent young women. He had already wrecked the life of another young woman who is soon going to be a mother of his child. At the first opportunity he deserts Marianne too, to marry Miss Grey who brings him a dowry of 30,000 pounds. (Singh 1995: 219)

The infatuation between Marianne and Willoughby is instant but not lasting. As instantly and easily as their friendship is formed, so also is the annulment of the same, due to sheer want of fortune and comfort by Willoughby. His preference for economic security to the finer qualities of affection lures him away from her to marry a rich lady of fifty thousand pound, who can afford the luxury of maintaining his expensive indulgence. Miss Grey is rich but not handsome but her wealth compensates her want of beauty just as Willoughby’s “good looks” compensates his want of fortune. He later confesses to Elinor that his action is simply the dictate of his selfish endeavours. Willoughby marries Sophia Grey without any regard or affection and she too agrees to marry him for the sake of an establishment only. It is like a business transaction which is contrary to the novelist’s idea of an ideal marriage built on love and not money. Their marriage is an establishment which comes nothing short of an economic pact.
Marianne has been a victim of physical attraction and pays dearly for her mistake. She almost died in sorrow when her beau jilts her for a richer woman. She is of the opinion that: “I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both” (335). When such a person does not care or intends to marry her, she is devastated. C.B. Cox, in his review of Tony Tanner’s *Jane Austen*, has commented that like all traditional romantic novels’ denouement, Marianne is no more in the novel after being jilted by Willoughby according to Tanner but the novelist differs from his idea and has a still better future for her.

For Tanner, the true Marianne in effect by the end of the novel is dead. This view underrates the values of rational self-control enacted by Jane Austen’s prose. She is not afraid to suggest that a young woman passionately in love with a worthless but handsome young man will be much happier if she marries an older man, eligible, honest and loving if less sexually exciting. (Cox 1987: 334)

An older man, eligible, honest and loving is represented by none other than Colonel Brandon. He is the first man to be captivated by Marianne’s beauty and accomplishments of playing and singing with the piano. Too young to differentiate between infatuation and true love, Marianne has sidelined him for the more handsome and adventurous young Willoughby. Julia Brown is also of the same opinion with Cox in that the novelist “rejects an old notion of tragedy for a new one. People do not die of unrequited love, the author suggests; that only happens in literature. . . . Marianne is better alive and married to Colonel Brandon than dead” (Brown 1979: 45). To remain alive and be a comfort to Brandon would be a far better choice for Marianne than to commit suicide for a worthless gentleman. They both deserve one another after suffering so much from their first loves.

The novelist recommends the union of Marianne and Brandon as she states that not only Colonel Brandon but all those who best love him want him to be happy and as he deserved to be after what he has done for her in time of her sickness. He has fetched her mother from Barton and is ever willing to be of use to the Dashwood ladies. His unselfish deed is rewarded as “in Marianne he was consoled for every past affliction; her regard and her society restored his mind to animation, and his
spirits to cheerfulness. . . . Marianne could never loved by halves; and her whole heart became in time, as much devoted to her husband, as it had once been to Willoughby” (631). Ian Watt comments that “Marianne had been lucky, not only to find Colonel Brandon waiting to take her in, but also to have a sister like Elinor who took a more realistic view of what the individual can concede without losing his integrity” (Watt 1963: 50). With such loving persons to nurse her back to life, Marianne only has to change her earlier maxim and marry her second love whom she eventually comes to love and adore much to Willoughby’s envy and regret. Chastened after the disappointment of infatuation and “Elinor’s exemplary behaviour on being similarly disappointed by Edward – she discovers, and changes, and so becomes a personality at last, as she learns to love Colonel Brandon, not by first impulse, but through reflection, or ‘sense’” (Miles 2003: 19).

We have some other married couples as foil to the above two ideal couples in the novel. We would briefly touch on their relationships to see why the novelist does not recommend their relationships. Mr and Mrs John Dashwood and Robert Ferrars and Lucy Steele are two married couples whose relationships are based purely on economic and material advancement. They would be discussed to show how they relate to one another as married couple as a consequence of their parents’ upbringing.

Mr and Mrs John Dashwood are the best example of materialistic couple among all Jane Austen’s novels. Their passion to accumulate and not part with any of their resources is well depicted in their relationship to their relatives. John Dashwood is an heir to Norland Park and is already wealthy by the fortune of his mother and by his own marriage to a rich lady. As such the Norland estate is not as important to him as to his step-mother and sisters, who have no other resources save the one thousand each left by the rich Old Dashwood. He has married Fanny Ferrars, the sister of Edward. Jane Austen describes the couple as: “He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold-hearted, and rather selfish . . . Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was; he might even have been amiable himself . . . Mrs. John Dashwood was . . . more narrow-minded and selfish” (325).
The relationship of this couple is purely materialistic and mechanical. They are devoid of any filial feeling expected of the benevolent relative. John has broken the pledge made at the death-bed of his father, at his wife’s selfish dissuasion as Fanny very subtly regards the assistance to be given to the sisters as “robbery” from their son’s treasury. She begs him to think: “How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum?” (327). Fanny does not want to associate herself with her in-laws whom she considers as a drain and burden to their pocket. Fanny is exactly like her mother, Mrs Ferrars in nature as well as in her dominance against her avarice. She has the fore-knowledge of what annual provision means as she is a party to her mother’s disgust to providing for old employees to whom her father has left yearly provision. She cautions her husband against his intention by referring to her mother’s problem in executing her late father’s will and explains that: “An annuity is a very serious business . . . my mother was clogged with the payment of three to old superannuated servants by my father’s will, . . . My mother was quite sick of it. . . . It has given me such an abhorrence of annuities, that I am sure I would not pin myself down to the payment of one for all the world” (329-30). The Ferrars “worship money with a religious intensity. . . To acquire and retain money is, in their eyes, right, and to spend or give is wrong” (Kennedy 1969: 57-8). Charity does not seem to be in the temperament of the Ferrars women. Only Edward seems to inherit the kindness of the noble hearted Old Ferrars who has left annuity for his loyal subordinates.

The Dashwood couple would have been seen in better circumstances had John, according to the novelist, married an “amiable woman” who could have improved his character towards good deeds. Unfortunately as he has married someone as selfish as himself, and as such willingly complies with his wife’s decision to breach his promise to assist his relatives. “The perfect compatibility of the John Dashwoods, for example, rests in the cold blooded materialism and in the narrow selfishness which they share equally” (Brown 1976: 36). Llyod Brown’s description of the couple is very appropriate. The material concern takes precedent over the relatives’ welfare. John’s selfish nature therefore cannot implore his
relatives to stay on the estate when they inform him of their intention to move out nor help them in any financial assistance when they eventually move out for good.

The tradition by which John inherits the Norland Park entails him to care for his female relatives. He knows only how to accept the advantage of the tradition without the responsibility attached to it. The disengaging from the family obligation to support Mrs Dashwood and her daughters by John Dashwood is: “an attack on the abuses, not of sensibility, but of sense, in its prudential economic meaning” (Watt 1963: 47). He totally abdicates his role as a step-son and brother to his immediate family transferring the burden to Mr Middleton, a far distant relative of Mrs Dashwood, who comes to their aid in providing shelter to his helpless relatives. John’s action is a sham and violation of the tradition. Jane Austen’s portrayal of Mr Middleton as a patron is advocated but also seems to plead the patronage of brothers to support needy sisters to avoid humiliation in seeking the assistance of kindred while they could be honourably taken in by their own siblings. She has personally experienced the patronage of her brother, Edward in real-life and so beseeches others to do the same for the vulnerable sisters and widows.

In the ousting of the Dashwood ladies we can recall Mary Wollstonecraft’s remark of the plight of unfortunate girls dependent on the mercy of their brothers. They are easily influenced by their wives’ insinuations and foregoes filial obligations. Swarup Singh quotes Mary Wollstonecraft’s comment on this line:

> These brothers are . . . good sort of men, and give as a favour what children of the same parents had an equal right to. In this equivocal humiliating situation, a docile female may remain sometime with a tolerable degree of comfort. But when the brother marries . . . from being considered as the mistress of the family, she [the sister] is viewed with averted looks as an intruder, an unnecessary burden on the benevolence of the master of the house and the new partner. (qtd. in Singh 1995:173)

Fanny occupies the Norland estate as soon as Mr Henry Dashwood’s funeral is over, without any prior notice of her intention. So ungraciously does she install herself as the rightful mistress of Norland, treating her mother and sisters-in-law with such
cold civility that the former members of the estate are degraded to the position of “visitors” (327). As Fanny has been brought up with the attitude of acquiring more wealth, she must have married John out of material gain and not out of love or affection. As she has no cordial relationship with her in-laws, she deliberately behaves the way she does to show “how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act when occasion required it” (326). In other words, Fanny is exercising her authority over her relatives. No maternal or sisterly concern is seen in her cold attitude which is strongly felt by the female readers who expects some lenient consideration for the same sex amidst the harsh male tradition. Unlike the benevolent brother, John is concerned about his step-sisters only on terms of economy and no filial affection. He loves to be related to his sisters only on the basis of affluent connection if they are married to rich gentlemen without any expenses incurred from his end.

The marriage of Robert Ferrars and Lucy Steele too is based purely on materialistic and economic alliance. Robert is just the opposite of his elder brother Edward. He is as indulgent as his mother would allow. As a second son, Robert sabotages the heir-ship of his elder brother’s inheritance and wilfully dishonours the trust of his mother by marrying the same lady for whom his brother is disowned. He is in fact proud of achieving a feat: “He was proud of his conquest, proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately without his mother’s consent” (629). Nothing but vanity compels him to violate the trust of both the mother and brother. In a way, his action serves as the most appropriate punishment on his mother. He has found a perfect partner in Lucy. She is a good actress and can entice anyone from whom she could benefit. As a schemer, she can entice anyone who meets her needs. Just as Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* changes his preferment from Jane to Elizabeth within Mrs Bennet’s “stirring the fire” (62), Lucy changes her mind the moment the Ferrars’ inheritance changes hand. It is no doubt due to the selfish intent of Lucy that Edward is liberated to fulfil his wishes but her motive is not appreciable.

The older generation considers money more important than affection without much concern for their compatibility and as such the children cannot lead perfect or
harmonious married lives. They, at best, have to bear up the difference even if both the partners have their differences in their views. Thus the marriage of convenience is upheld at all cost as divorce was unthought-of and there was no other means for the women to provide for themselves, should their marriages fall apart. In John Halperin’s words, one of the most “unappealing things about the character in Sense and Sensibility is their preoccupation with money; it is virtually the only thing talked about in the novel, and it is the only yardstick many of them use to measure the ‘respectability’ of others” (Halperin 1984: 86). In doing so, Jane Austen is exposing the reality and cruelty that society is upholding beneath the ‘decorum’ and ‘propriety’ which govern their mindset.
Works Cited


Northanger Abbey is Jane Austen’s first completed work but published only after her death in 1818 along with her last novel Persuasion. It was written when Jane just reached twenty-one and is the most adventurous of all Jane Austen’s novels. It reflects the novelist’s naive and humorous attitude to life. In the introduction to the novel, it is written that the novel “is in some respects the Cinderella among Jane Austen’s novels” (Blair 2007: v). It might be rightly said as the novel has some elements similar to the Cinderella’s theme and plot. The suffering of the heroine at the hands of tyrannical parent (though different), endurance of her fate patiently and reward by the happy marriage with the hero – a happy ending – are some of the similar elements of a fairy tale.

How the parents of the protagonists’ relationships are basic in shaping the mind and behaviour of their children is seen when we explore the characters of General Tilney and Mrs Tilney, parents of the hero, Henry, and Mr and Mrs Morland, parents of the heroine, Catherine. Parental overbearing nature can induce good children to retaliate their parents in disobedience while the moderate and liberal parents would often encourage prudent but irresolute personalities. The extreme disparity of the two parents and their relationships to each other and their children will be our focus in this discussion.

The marriage of General Tilney and Mrs Tilney would be discussed to show how incompetent couple makes incompetent parents. In the eighteenth century England, it is observed that “most men were attracted either by a woman’s money or by her beauty and these precisely are the motives for marriage” (Singh 1995: 198). Just as rich young men have been attracted to pretty ladies; rich ladies have also been attracted to handsome men. This is true in the marriage of General Tilney and Mrs Tilney. General Tilney has been captivated not by her beauty but by the fortune of Miss Drummond (which was Mrs Tilney’s maiden name) and she has been attracted by his handsome mien and not so much by his fortune. One may not be totally wrong to assume that General Tilney has married his wife for her fortune.
alone. “Mrs Tilney was a Miss Drummond, and she and Mrs Hughes were schoolfellows; and Miss Drummond had a very large fortune; and, when she married, her father gave her twenty thousand pounds, and five hundred to buy wedding-clothes” (47) is Mrs Allen’s account of Mrs Tilney. General Tilney must have enchanted Miss Drummond with his physical appearance and gallantry in younger days. As we have no evidence of her great beauty, her fortune might have attracted him more than her physical look. Her death, before the start of the novel, deprives us of their compatibility and marital harmony. They are fortunate to have obedient and amiable children who play to the tune of an autocratic father. Tom Tilney, the heir to the General’s estate is the black-sheep of the family. Henry, the hero, takes up the second son’s profession, that of a clergyman with full dignity and enthusiasm while Eleanor is the docile and caring daughter.

The interference of parents in the relationship of the children with their future partners is advocated during Austen’s time. Balls, dinners, tea-party and morning visits are purposely arranged to allow their children to meet and choose their counterparts according to their compatibility. As a single parent, General Tilney is concerned about his second son, Henry’s future as he would not be entitled to any of his estate or fortune as per the tradition. It is therefore quite natural that he should look out for Henry a rich lady to marry and enrich the parsonage which he would eventually take up. In his endeavour to do so, he goes a little overboard. Seeing Henry dance with Catherine, the heroine, he goes around enquiring about her background and meets John Thorpe, a complete stranger, from whom he finds that the lady dancing with Henry is an heiress. He does not know that John is a habitual rattler who can lie to praise or defame anyone without considering its consequences. If one has to be judged by the company he keeps, the General’s “association with the unattractive John Thorpe, before we see anything of his own personality, makes him unattractive by association” (Craik 1968: 22-23). John, at that point of time, is considering Catherine to be his future bride and so makes up about her wealth without knowing why the General should be interested particularly in Catherine. Seeing her in the company of the Allens, who “owned the chief of the property
about Fullerton” (7) and knowing that they are issueless, both General Tilney and John must have presumed that she must be their heir.

The compatibility of the children’s mind and affection for their partner has no room in the General’s plan for their marriage. He is rich but vain and greedy. He has married a wife of fortune and so have no scruple to encourage his son to follow his path. The General’s belief of Catherine’s fortune pleases him exceedingly. His excitement at such a lucky stroke of fate has exceeded his sense of propriety so as to interrupt the dance to whisper his consent to Henry, which is a gross breach of conduct in an age where propriety was upheld at any cost. His indiscreet manner creates confusion to Catherine who blushes from fear of something wrong in her appearance. Henry puts her anxiety to rest when he says: “That gentleman knows your name, and you have a right to know his. It is General Tilney, my father” (56). Intrusion into the girl’s background so as to ascertain and assess if she is fit to be associated with his son and that too at public places shows his lack of social decorum and his domineering attitude towards his children. In order to capture Catherine, the General encourages his son’s courtship and even invites her to his estate, much to the pleasure his daughter, Eleanor and Henry who are in need of company in their large, empty estate. He is literally sabotaging John’s plan in whisking Catherine away as Henry needs a rich heiress to improve the parsonage which is badly depleted by the elder son, Frederick’s indulgence.

Love or affection is totally non existence in General Tilney’s relationship to his children. He runs his household just like running an army contingent. Everything is at his command and wishes, sometimes causing much embarrassment and hardship to his children. Barbara Hardy remarks that: “His autocracy ordering his household, demanding its prompt attendance in the elegant dining-room on the stroke of five . . . and evicting his guest the minute he discovers her unsuitability for his purposes. Hospitality can be no more effectively and thoroughly breached . . .” (Hardy 1976: 81). The humorous part of gross misconception lies on both the host as well as on the guest. Just as General Tilney mistakes Catherine for an heiress, she too has construed him as a Montoni in gothic novels. As the General has a very arrogant and domineering nature, it is not wrong on the part of Catherine, young and
naïve as she is, to deduce that he might have either murdered Mrs Tilney or concealed her in some secret room in the house and supplying her with nightly coarse food. On the other side the General is courteous and pliant to Catherine like a young lover to his beloved. In doing so, he is seen ascourting her himself. If not for Henry, Catherine would be floored by the General’s charm. Seeing the attention given to Catherine by the hero’s father, one cannot help recalling Austen’s comment in her other novel *Sense and Sensibility* where Mrs Dashwood, the heroine’s mother, too is being given due attention by her daughter, Elinor’s suitor, Edward: “Indeed a man could not very well be in love with either of her daughters, without extending the passion to her” (394). Catherine cannot exhibit passion according to the social and traditional norms or else she would be endeavouring to win Henry’s father for his approval. The case being reversed, it is the father who instead of being wooed has to woo for the son. The General can go to any extend to execute his wishes as and when necessary without any thought of the consequences as we would see later in his treatment of Catherine.

The General’s second meeting with John turns the tide of Catherine’s fate. John has changed his tune of praise of Catherine after she rejects his proposal and so he constructs her as a pauper. The news has shattered the General’s dreams. Instead of being humbled by his folly in believing his report about the misconception of Catherine’s status and fortune, the General, in utter fury and shame, chases Catherine out of the Abbey forgetting all parental concerns and duty in sending a young lady-guest moneyless and unescorted. The General is breaching code of conduct in evicting a guest from his estate so ungraciously and unethical at such a short notice. He is accountable for violating parental responsibility – sending a young lady unescorted and risking her life to the perils of uncertainties on the road on a Sunday, which is a rest day for Christians. His rude behaviour embarrasses his children in the sight of their guest and has broken the cordial relationship of father-son relationship with Henry.

In contrast to the General’s rudeness as a parent, we see a sober and liberal treatment of the Morlands as parents to Catherine and James Morland. The marriage of Mr and Mrs Morland is that of love and understanding and the only marriage
amongst the parents of Jane Austen’s novel where we see an amiable partnership in the upbringing of their children. The personalities of their son, James and Catherine show how well they have been brought up despite the financial constraints due to a large family. They have managed to inculcate good moral and sound principles which help them to adjust in society at large and there is no vice in their behaviour. Such upright persons are no doubt, not worldly-wise and so are easily swayed by the scheming persons like the Thorpes siblings with their pretentious affections which affect their lives terribly just like the Crawfords siblings who disgrace the Bertram siblings in *Mansfield Park*.

As responsible parents, the Morlands keep a cordial relationship with their children. They are very loving, plain and forthright. Catherine is their fourth child. They take care of her education jointly but do not force her to do things which she dislikes. Mrs Morland does not “insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste” (4), allowed Catherine to leave off. Mr Morland teaches writing and accounts while Mrs Morland, French which Catherine does not seem to appreciate as “she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could”. They do not compel her to learn beyond her aptitude and interest. Catherine is left to lead her life as she pleases which in later stage, makes her act without any restraints on her impulses. The married life of the Morlands is congenial, compatible and both are concerned for their children’s welfare, though not much attention could be given to Catherine by her mother in her formative stage as there are too many younger siblings to care for. Their lack of higher education to some extent could not enable them to infuse the ways of the world. In Catherine’s own understanding her parents’ lack of mental improvement is because “new books do not fall in our way” (25). They want to promote their daughter’s welfare and so allow her to accompany Mr and Mrs Allen when Mr Allen, a rich landlord of Fullerton, is ordered to go for treatment to Bath. Mrs Allen, being fond of Catherine, decides to take her along, much to the delight of the Morlands and Catherine’s own happiness. What they cannot provide is extended to their neighbours’ benevolence as the Morlands trust the responsibility of their daughter to the Allens in good faith. The role of patron, mentor or surrogate parents were in practice to promote the welfare of the children
in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as the Morlands have no means to further their daughter’s perspectives, they rely on the Allens to expose Catherine to the outside world to widen her knowledge.

As loving as they are as parents, Mr and Mrs Morland are totally unaware of the dangers that might await their dear daughter at Bath. Before Catherine’s departure for her ‘entrée’ to public ball, Mrs Morlands, instead of cautioning her daughter against the dangers outside such as “the violence of such nobleman and baronets as delight in forcing young ladies away to some remote farm house, must, at such a moment, relieve the fullness of heart. . . . But Mrs Morland knew so little of lords and baronets, that she entertained no notion of their general mischievousness, and was wholly unsuspicous of danger to her daughter from their machination” (8). Her cautions are therefore confined to the following points, “I beg, Catherine, you will always wrap yourself up very warm about the throat when you come from the Rooms at night, and I wish you would try to keep some account of the money you spend; - I will give you this little book on purpose” and her father, instead of giving her an unlimited order on his banker, or even putting an hundred pounds bank-bill into her hands, gives her “only ten guineas, and promised her more when she wanted it” (8). Everything on the part of the parents is done by the Morlands but due to ignorance of the outside world, all they could do is to take care for herself.

Whatever Mr and Mrs Morlands might have expected by their daughter’s association with the Tilney siblings is thwarted when they see their daughter coming home unescorted on a post-chaise one fine Sunday. The rude behaviour of the General as a parent is deeply felt by Catherine’s parents. Evicting a guest without prior notice and that too, a young and naïve lady, who is not familiar with the route of seventy long miles, unescorted and moneyless is uncalled for. The journey needs change of horses at two stations with uncertainties on the bad roads for eleven hours. The uncivil attitude of the General incurs disdain from the other parents whose child’s life is put at risk. The period is noted for the upkeep of moral and social code of conduct of which the General is guilty of violating. Neither the social status nor the wealth of his landed property would condone his lapse of parental responsibility
in the eyes of the Morlands or the society at large. The Morlands are deeply affected by his behaviour:

Without suffering any romantic alarm, in the consideration of their daughter’s long and lonely journey, Mr and Mrs Morland could not but feel that it might have been productive of much unpleasantness to her; that it was what they could never have voluntarily suffered; and that, in forcing her on such a measure, General Tilney had acted neither honourably nor feelingly – neither as a gentleman nor a parent. (170)

Simple and moderate as they are, they do not indulge much in their apprehension of any untoward events that might have befallen to their daughter on the way and dismiss the General’s rude behaviour as: “a strange business, and that he must be a very strange man” (170). They understand the goodwill of Henry when he comes to Fullerton in defiance against his father’s demand to ward off Catherine. The parent’s faulty arrogance has to be amended by the son in person with much embarrassment. He apologises to the Morlands for his father’s ungracious send-off of their daughter and to Catherine the truth of his father’s rudeness is explained. When Henry seeks their consent for Catherine, the Morlands are pleased but not in haste to give their consent. “Their tempers were mild, but their principles were steady, and while his parent so expressly forbad the connection, they could not allow themselves to encourage it” (182). Like all understanding parents, they need the General’s solicitation to make “the decent appearance of consent” which they already had in mind. They approve of the union as Henry proves himself worthy of their daughter’s love and trusting that she would be in good hands, they accept the marriage proposal.

The marriage of Catherine and Henry is like a fairy tale love story in which the heroine falls in love with the hero without knowing who he is but simply because he happens be the first man who appeals to her. It is a marriage brought about of both physical and love. They are a pair of young couple who are attracted to each other right from their first meeting. Catherine, a young country girl coming to town in search of a possible husband that could not be found “within the forty surrounding houses” at Fullerton, is fortunate to find her Prince Charming at her first public entrée at Bath. In Blair’s words, “she marries the first man she dances with,
which is pretty good going for a heroine whose ordinariness might arguably disqualify her from being one at all” (Blair 2007: vii).

Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney are acquainted on her second public ball. They are introduced by the “master of the ceremonies” (13). He is a young man of twenty-five and is described as “rather tall, had a pleasing countenance, a very intelligent and lively eye, and, if not quite handsome, was very near it. His address was good, Catherine felt herself in high luck” (13). In fact Henry is the first man who pays court to her as she has been extraordinarily ordinary in her childhood. Her features or her habits have never been feminine or attractive. She has a thin awkward figure, a swallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features and “fond of all boys’ plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyment of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush (3). Nothing in Catherine’s physique, intelligence or accomplishments would recommend her to any young man in her neighbourhood. She is wild, noisy, hates confinement and cleanliness and nothing more enjoyable than rolling down the green slope at the back of the house. Such are her joys and dislikes till ten years old which exhibit nothing extraordinary about her – in character nor in heroic deeds to project her as a heroine. Yet her creator attributes her unpopularity for the absence of young men who would notice her in her neighbourhood. Trained to be a heroine and reaching the age of seventeenth and having seen not “one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility; without having one real passion. . . . This was strange indeed! But strange things may be generally accounted for if their cause be fairly searched out” (7). Jane Austen’s “strange things” is not the fault of the heroine but for the lack in the situation. Lack of “one lord in the neighbourhood”, “a baronet”, no foundling “found at their door step”, “no ward” of her father and “the squire of the parish no children” (ibid.) are reasons enough why Catherine does not have an admirer at her home-town.

Catherine, on reaching the age of fifteen, starts to metamorphose from the ugly duckling to “quite a good-looking girl, - she is almost pretty today’ (4), is the relieving comment of her parents. She starts curling her hair, longs for ball, her features are improved and softened by plumpness and colour and her dislikes and
taste also are changed. She no longer likes to be dirty but inclines more to finery and looks clean and smart. As Catherine has to be made a heroine she has to be taken out to a more conducive atmosphere. “But where a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way” (7). The opportunity opens for Catherine when she follows the Allens and as fortune would favour, she meets the very man whom she would marry at her first dance. Catherine’s enthusiasm as a young girl on her first visit to a city is described as: “Incautious and friendly as a new-hatched chick, looks round upon a world where everything is wonderful. A dewy freshness lies upon the whole scene and she cannot distinguish romance from reality” (Kennedy 1969: 60). Despite her rustic upbringing, Margaret Kennedy praises her for the balance of keeping herself abreast with her new environment, with little help from her snobbish chaperon. She has come to a city and sees everything different from her home town. How this innocent country girl manages to find an eligible husband far above her social status is through her sheer exertion to hold on to Henry Tilney, whom she thinks is her hero and of course through the magic wand of the author, who wants to prove the inevitable to happen to her character.

Catherine and Henry’s relationship is complementary to each others’ personality and helps to build a balanced bond of friendship. Henry’s strong character is needed to dispel Catherine’s romantic illusions of the Gothic romance which she has come to be obsessed through the influence of an elder friend, Isabella Thorpe, whom she meets at Bath. She needs his love to cure her of her obsession as he is the only person who loves her as she is, without any condition. Her naivety and trust in him wins him over to reciprocate her affection. According to John Halperin the novel is Jane Austen’s most detached novel where there is more of Jane in her hero than her heroine. This comment is justified if we analyse the novel from the hero’s perspective where on almost every occasion Henry either teases or reprimands Catherine by checking what she would or ought to do as a young lady of the society.

Henry Tilney is the only one of Jane Austen’s heroes who shares her viewpoint, the only one who ever threatens the primacy of her heroine... to be accepted as the
spokesman in *Northanger Abbey*. . . her greatest leading man . . . the most witty, the most incisive, the most charming, the most interesting. Among them all he is the most like the novelist herself. . . . He is a male Elizabeth. . . . Like the Austen heroines, he is our chief observer and interpreter in the novel. (Halperin 1984: 103)

In the courtship of Catherine and Henry, we see the author’s comment on the uselessness of the artificial decorum through the mind of the heroine. Catherine and Henry have already been acquainted for quite some time when suddenly he realises that his conduct towards her has gone amiss. He addresses her as: “I have hitherto been very remiss, madam, in the proper attentions of a partner here; I have not yet asked you how long you have been in Bath; whether you were ever here before; . . . I have been very negligent – but are you now at leisure to satisfy me in these particulars? If you are I will begin directly” (13). And so he starts enquiring after “forming his features into a set smile, and affectionately softening his voice, he added, with a simpering air, ‘Have you been long in Bath, madam?’” (ibid.). Catherine finds his manners quite strange and tries not to laugh at him despite responding to all his queries. He concludes his queries with a smirk and becomes rational again, as is the call of gentlemanly attitude towards his partner those days.

The code of conduct of the eighteenth century literature demands that gentlemen followed certain set rules in the society. This seems to be exactly what Henry is applying in addressing Catherine on their first encounter. In Long’s view, they practiced an “elaborate social code of the time. Just as a gentleman might not act naturally, but must follow exact rules in doffing his hat, or addressing a lady, or entering a room, or wearing a wig, or offering his snuffbox to his friend” (Long 1978: 263). Henry is therefore playing the perfect gentleman in addressing his partner but to the naïve addressee, it seems funny at the artificial manner of performing it. He keeps her occupied the whole evening with his preconceived notion of knowing “young ladies’ ways” and teases her on what she would have written about him in her journal. This is totally new to Catherine who does not keep one nor is not used to being teased at. Yet, she is amused and finds Henry interesting though a little strange when he tries a little too hard to impress her with his sense of bargaining the cost of muslins. Can Jane Austen be amused at such show of
artificiality in men or does she recommend it needs prodding. She does not speak out as Virginia Woolf comments but presents the situation as it is for one’s own judgement. “She wishes neither to reform nor to annihilate; she is silent; and that is terrific indeed” (Woolf 1975: 176). Jane Austen just presents the situation to task without any comment. It is her style to expose the vanity of some of the social norms which are artificial and not very useful to the society.

Jane Austen seems to contradict the conduct book of Mr Richardson for young ladies: “that no young lady can be justified in falling in love before the gentleman’s love is declared, it must be very improper that a young lady should dream of a gentleman before the gentleman is first known to have dreamt of her” (16). Contrary to this notion, Jane allows Catherine, on parting from her partner at the end of the dance, to feel a strong inclination for continuing his acquaintance and is drown in his memory be it “when she drank her warm wine and water, and prepared herself for bed, as to dream of him”(16). Catherine also goes hunting for Henry the next day to the Pump-room where every creature in Bath, except himself, is seen and “crowds of people were seen every moment passing in and out . . . people whom nobody cared about, and nobody wanted to see; and he alone was absent” (17). There are no rules to one’s passion and action as seen in the mind of young offshoot which cannot be limited. Catherine’s love for Henry is innocent, naive and rather too bold for a young girl of seventeen. She has not felt for any young man as she does for him in her home town. Not finding Henry she takes refuge in her new friendship with Isabella Thorpe, who spurred up her obsession with Mrs Radcliffe’s novels.

Catherine and Henry both fall in love with no regard for fortune, fame or status. Catherine falls for the first man who pays court to her and more so because he is a clergy “for she must confess herself very partial to the profession” (20-21). She is not wrong in her choice of her husband as she is filled with all the intrigues and mysteries of romantic illusions of the gothic novel of Mrs Radcliffe. It is pointed out that the novel seems to be “characteristically made a heroine the victim of such [romantic illusions] delusions, and called on a hero of sense, perhaps aided by a sensible clergyman, to dispel them” (Kirkham 1983: 88). The call of sensible
clergymen to dispel delusion brings to one’s mind the moral implication of Christianity, where priest or a pastor is sought to exorcise a possessed person. Jane Austen seems to deliver a lesson to steer clear of the obsession that pervades the reading public with Gothic novels during her time which were not healthy nor edifying the mind of the society. She vocalises her thoughts through her hero, Henry, when he reprimands Catherine, at the Abbey. Nowhere is she so strong in expressing her personal view through Henry Tilney about the gothic romance.

Henry is projected as the model among Jane Austen’s heroes. He possesses all the virtue of a noble heart in accepting Catherine as she is in her ignorance of the worldly wisdom, unsophisticated manners and outright opinions and frankness. Her errors are overlooked and often amended. “Despite the occasional flight of giddy levity, Henry Tilney is the model of a man, partly because he does the right thing by Catherine and partly because he happily embraces his destiny as a second son bound for a parsonage. As we have seen, this is a destiny Edward Ferrars secretly prefers and Edmund Bertram openly embraces” (Miles 2003: 113). Clergy might not have been the model of masculine rectitude always as we see in Jane Austen’s presentation of Mr Collins or Mr Elton who despite holding the honoured statute stray from the right path for their own worldly gain. They are not meant for their office but for the need of a job to survive and due to the good fortune of having patrons to give them the livings. As such, Miles asserts that Mr Collins has clearly unmanned himself, rendering himself socially useless through his obsequiousness and abject snobbery. Jane Austen’s preference for the clergy as an honourable profession is clearly shown as three of her heroes are of this office besides the fact that her father and two of her brothers as well were also of the same.

Catherine and Henry have no ulterior motive or pretence in their courtship. Right from the start Catherine makes no pretence of her love for Henry. She does not realise that it is unfeminine to and praises him to his sister, Eleanor when she unconsciously comments “How well your brother dances!” (49). Catherine’s open admiration for Henry surprises as well as amuses Eleanor. When their first proposed walk has been thwarted due to John Thorpe’s lies, Catherine’s explanation to Henry is quite flattering! On the first available opportunity, she confesses to Henry saying
“if Mr Thorpe would only have stopped, I would have jumped out and run after you.’ . . . Is there a Henry in the world who could be insensible to such a declaration? Henry Tilney at least was not. With a yet sweeter smile, he said everything that need be said of his sister’s concern, regret, and dependence on Catherine’s honour’” (66). Catherine’s blunt frankness easily remedies her fault and is soon forgiven. On Henry’s part too, there seem to be an already protective tendency towards Catherine, as though she belongs to him. He is possessive to the extent of regarding her as a “wife” unconsciously when John Thorpe interrupts them while they are dancing. He complains:

That gentleman would have put me out of patience, had he stayed with you half a minute longer. He has no business to withdraw the attention of my partner from me. . . . Nobody can fasten themselves on the notice of one, without injuring the rights of the other. I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage. Fidelity and complaisance are the principal duties of both; and those men who do not choose to dance or marry themselves, have no business with the partners or wives of their neighbours. (53)

A dance partner to be so affected by an intruder must have been quite a serious person. Henry is offended and complains of Catherine’s light-hearted conversation with John, who has no decency to interrupt her while dancing with him. So also is General Tilney who whispers to Henry earlier. The country girl has suddenly become the centre of attraction to three gentlemen, all for different reasons. John sees her as his rightful property and the General as a prospective wife for his son, both under the illusion that she is an heiress. They gossip about Catherine as “a new source of income on the market. Discussing her supposed financial status would be a little different in their minds from discussing the value of stocks and bonds and any other projected or potential investment. The fact that neither had the slightest idea of her real worth forms the core of the humorous irony” (Hoehler 1995: 127). Only Henry is unconcerned about her financial value. Just as Elizabeth attracts Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* with her continual rejections, Catherine attracts Henry with her innocence and honest expression of courting his attention, which later results in
lasting friendship. Richardson’s dictum has no influence on the brass uneducated young maid whose unpretentious mind is only to be with the one man she loves!

The budding love affair is spurred on at the Abbey. Seeing her interest in the gothic novels, Henry fills her up with all the mysterious illusions of an old abbey on the way to amuse her, which is why Catherine fancies herself as a gothic heroine to speculate unfounded allegation and suspicion against the General’s personality. She is misguided as she is not well-read: “Unaware of the difference between an abbey in a Radcliffe novel set in sixteenth-century France and a residential abbey in central England in 1800, . . . she falls back on the Gothic narrative that she does possess, filtered through Henry’s reinforcement of them” (Blair 2007: xviii). The novelist has asserted that Catherine, not being interested in history, might not know how the present abbey has been modified from the ancient state. Henry too is partly to be blamed for teasingly predicting all the apprehensions in the abbey, not in the least expecting that she would take his words literally. Despite the modern furnishing, the obsession and the inclination to elude everything to gothic takes paramount to her naïve imagination, for which she has to suffer great humiliation later at the hands of Henry.

The much anticipated time to get more intimated with Henry at the Abbey is not conducive as the General takes upon himself as the rightful person to escort Catherine with subdued humility causing embarrassment to his siblings. The young friends are not at liberty to explore and enjoy the Abbey on their own. Eleanor is not at all free to take her friend to her favourite spot neither in the garden nor to her mother’s room as her father is always at command of all their movements. The time spent in his presence is not the same as when they are left alone. The overbearing attitude of the General brings to mind the Bertrams of Mansfield Park where the daughters are happy in their father’s absence and dreadful on hearing of his arrival from Antigua. The parent-sibling relationship is not congenial in the Tilneys’ household which is harmful to the personality of the children. Children of such upbringing either would be dominated and be submissive or rebellious when they cannot bear the demand anymore. Jane Austen seems to advocate certain leniency on the part of parents to allow the children to develop their own inclination, as the
Morlands do, regarding the pursuit of their own happiness. The forceful parent-dominance cannot exude the affectionate response or the need to confide in them from the children.

Catherine and Henry’s relationship almost comes to a close due to the oversight of Catherine’s impulsive venture to his mother’s room alone. Restriction to enter the rooms of Mrs Tilney by the General is the main reason for her heightened fancy of the Abbeys. Eleanor has earlier taken her to see her mother’s room when they are interrupted by her father. She cannot wait to see what lies behind the forbidden door and so she peeps into Mrs Tilney’s rooms alone, impatient to wait for Eleanor to escort her. To her dismay the rooms are well maintained and nothing untoward confirms her gothic fancy. Her impatience leads her to be thus humiliated when Henry, arriving home a day earlier, finds her alone near his mother’s room unescorted. Unable to hide her venture or the suspicion of his father’s role being the cause of the early death of his mother (though unsaid) Henry has reprimanded her of such imagination. His reproof finally exorcises her from the fantasy of all the wrong notions that she has been nurturing through the reading of Radcliffe novels:

If I understand you rightly, you have formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to – Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are Christians. . . . Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetuated without being known, in the country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dear Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting? (144)

Catherine’s obsession with the gothic fiction almost loses her chance with Henry’s good opinion of her. Henry reprimands her of her unfounded allegation against his father and of the time in which England is far progressing to have such unrealistic behaviour in the society. He is in fact exorcising Catherine of her illusions but she is not altogether wrong to suspect the General’s rudeness behind the guise of
gentlemanliness. Henry is one who stands apart from the others in loving Catherine for her innocence, virtue and simplicity, and her frankness which cannot distance him from her for long. He forgives her wrong notion of his father and loves her, not for once concerned with her accomplishments or for her dowry but for herself. Jane Austen seems to recommend this kind of platonic idea in a relationship. John Hardy quotes Richard Simpson who thinks that the novelist “seems to be saturated with the Platonic idea that the giving and receiving of knowledge, the active formation of another’s character, or more passive growth under another’s guidance, is the truest and strongest foundation of love” (qtd. in Hardy 1984: 10). Right from the first encounter, Henry has been unconsciously educating her with the ways of the ladies of the time. From keeping of journals, to being committed to one’s dance-partner, and finally to eradicate the wrong notion of applying gothic elements in her estimation of the General and the Abbey, Henry has been helping her to develop her mind in the right direction. Being eight years her senior, he is much more matured as well as well-read to teach and admonish Catherine in the ways of the world. Her ignorance and errors, instead of distancing him from her as she feared, only endears her to him as he feels responsible for her.

While a congenial friendship between Catherine and Henry is taking shape towards intimacy, a letter from her brother James arrives informing Catherine about his broken engagement with Isabella because of Frederick Tilney, Henry and Eleanor’s elder brother. Isabella has been engaged to James but when his real state of fortune is known, she wants to hook Frederick who is a better choice but ends up a loser. Catherine does not hesitate to communicate about the letter to her friends although it directly concerns them. She in fact urges Henry to warn his brother against the scheming Isabella, who “before his eyes, is violating an engagement voluntarily entered into with another man” (150). Such innocent declaration leads Henry to foretell the type of sister-in-law Eleanor would expect in future as: “Prepare for your sister-in-law, Eleanor, and such a sister-in-law as you delight in! – Open, candid, artless, guileless, with affections strong but simple, forming no pretensions and knowing no disguise” (150). It is an unconscious declaration of his
love for Catherine, which only Eleanor understands for she accepts the implication with a smile while the persons concerned are not aware of it.

Henry and Catherine have the same affinity towards the clergy profession. During her stay at Northanger, Catherine has visited Woodston, Henry’s Personage and is proudly escorted by the General to take stock of her opinion on the cottage, the interiors and the landscape, thus giving the impression that he approves of her as the rightful owner. This implication raises hope of her being approved by the General, which is soon to be proved wrong. Shortly after the visit to Woodston, the General leaves the Abbey on some work to London. The young friends spend their time getting to know each other intimately in the absence of their father. Catherine is pressed to spend some more time with them by Eleanor, which pleases Henry too. By now Catherine seems to believe that Henry loves her as she contemplates: “She did - almost always - believe that Henry loved her, and quite always that his father and sister loved and even wished to belong to them” (161). This simple assumption dispels her fear of his father’s disapproval of her due to her want of fortune.

Henry, as a young lover, might have wanted to stay on with Catherine at the Abbey but leaves to attend to his curate at Woodston for a couple of nights. This loyalty keeps him away from his friend and sister even when the General has charged him to attend to the ladies in his absence. Had Henry stayed on, neglecting his duty that day, the tragic eviction would have been averted or the portrayal of Catherine as an innocent victim would have been otherwise. On the same day of his departure, the General arrives late at night for the momentous eviction of Catherine from the Abbey. No time is given to inform her parents, no choice of day or time, no arrangement for escort or servants to accompany her but at seven the very next morning Catherine has to leave the Abbey. Only Eleanor attends to her last minute preparation for the long journey and breakfast the next day. Nothing of the father is seen contrary to Catherine’s hope of receiving at least an apology: “The possibility of some conciliatory message from the General occurred to her as his daughter appeared. What so natural, as that anger should pass away and repentance succeed it? and she only wanted to know how far, after what has passed, an apology might probably be received by her” (165-6). With the memories of the previous morning
where she has happily enjoyed her breakfast with Henry and Eleanor still fresh in her mind, Catherine hardly manages to take her breakfast. So intense is she in her anguish of being so unceremoniously terminated from the Abbey that Catherine does not even realise that she is in need of money for the journey home. If not for the goodness and sensitivity of her dear friend Eleanor, who offers her some amount, she would have no means of reaching home.

Catherine has left home with all eagerness to find a Prince Charming and indeed she does find one but not anymore as she has not yet secured any commitment from Henry. Before anything concrete can be developed, she has been sent off from the Abbey. What started as a good strike at finding the right man on her first adventure seems almost doomed and she returns to Fullerton dejected, rejected and defeated. Jane Austen describes her return in no heroic tone: “I bring back my heroine to her home in solitude and disgrace. . . . A heroine in a hack post-chaise, is such a blow upon sentiment, as no attempt at grandeur or pathos can withstand. Swiftly therefore shall her post-boy drive through the village, amid the gaze of Sunday groups, and speedy shall her descent from it” (169). The humiliation of being rejected by the beau’s father after raising such hope of “the most positive conviction of his actually wishing their marriage” only ten days ago is hard to take in by the naive Catherine. In addition to the wound inflicted on her tender heart, to be seen unescorted in an ordinary hack post-chaise, and that too, on a Sunday where everyone would be at home for attending service, the scene of her home-coming is indeed grave. Fullerton is a small village of about forty houses and everyone knows everything that goes on in the locality. To return home without an elder or a chaperon on a Sunday and without any happy events to report is quite an unpleasant blemish for the Morlands’ reputation. As such the parental irresponsibility of the General is very much criticised. It is noteworthy to mention that travelling on Sunday is condemned as one of William Elliot “bad habits” (123-4) in Persuasion as Christians observes the day as rest day and “General Tilney’s dismissal of seventeen-year-old Catherine Morland on a Sunday is egregious” (Hanaway 1986: 388). What Lorraine Hanaway means to imply is that the General is not considerate about the time and date of sending home an unescorted girl. Should there be any
mishaps on the way there would be no other travellers to rescue her. Moreover, it is a lapse of religious practice on the part of the General to discard such important day even if he is very furious. Besides the importune day, Hanaway quotes Chapman who states that travelling post in a hack carriage is not considered “desireable” (ibid. 389) and so Catherine’s home-coming is akin to an insult to her personality. Had they been informed, the Morlands would have pick her up or wait at some appointed station. Road condition of England in those days was still not yet in its finest state and highway robbery was rampant on deserted roads.

Parents usually make up for the children’s misconduct but in Henry’s case, it is the son making up for his father’s rudeness. He seeks the forgiveness of Catherine parents for the General. He also explains to Catherine that the reason of his father’s anger is not her fault but of his own in believing a stranger’s report of her background. “She was guilty only of being less rich than he had supposed her to be” (179). Furious at being cheated and made a fool by John’s false reports of Catherine’s wealth and later of her poverty, he is badly humiliated. He has been lied to about Catherine’s wealth by Thorpe’s invention once and should have been on guard when he informs him a second time of her poverty. In addition to her rejection of John’s proposal, her brother, James, too has rejected Isabella. John therefore exaggerates the status of the Morlands’ poverty to the General in anger. Finding no one to vent out his frustration, he has to terminate the very person who causes his humiliation although she is innocent of the crime. In trying to estrange the relationship, the General orders Henry to cut off all ties with Catherine which only hastens the reconciliation between them. His affection for her has been fuelled up by sympathy and shame which urges him to comfort and protect her, thus defying the tyrannical father to whom he has been an obedient son till now. When things have been sorted between the two lovers, question of acceptability arises from the parents for their marriage. Although the Morlands are happy for their daughter to receive a marriage proposal from an amiable person like Henry, they do not consent to an immediate engagement till the General gives his approval. Parental approval is a must to solemnise a marriage to Jane Austen.
Jane Austen knows the value of money without which a young couple would be able to start a family. She approves of Eleanor and her partner’s delay to marry till he comes of some means to support her. It would also ensure her father’s willingness to give her away without any fear of their economic insecurity. Yet the fact that the gentleman, only after his “unexpected accession to title and fortune” has enabled him to approach for his hand is not for nothing. The General becomes extremely elated so as to hail Eleanor as “Your Ladyship”, which proves his obsession for rank and wealth as well. The young man’s acquired title of Viscount and fortune are a booster to his deflated scheme and as such the General’s immediate jubilation at the match of Eleanor to a rich young nobleman is indeed a prized accomplishment. The young couple acts as a mediator to get the General’s approval for Henry’s marriage to Catherine.

Henry and Catherine’s love culminates in marriage only after the General’s blasted ego has been inflated by the marriage of his daughter, Eleanor to a wealthy young man. The marriage of Catherine and Henry is thus based on love, respect and friendship, upon which a strong foundation of lasting friendship is established and most recommended by the novelist. Jane Austen preference for a love marriage is depicted throughout the novels. No matter how long it takes to recognise the suitability and amiability of the protagonists themselves or wait for parental approval, they are faithful to each other through the test of time and circumstances and in the end we see them as perfect partners fit to generate a future society.

Jane Austen seems to be advocating the marriage of Catherine and Henry in the novel with that of Eleanor’s to her wealthy husband among the minor characters. In exploring the various relationships, she is indirectly cautioning the young generation to prioritise their personal edification by being married to their compatible partner basing on love, respect and understanding and not just for the sake of instituting an establishment of marriage or for the sake of economic security. As such much importance is given to the development of Catherine and Henry’s relationship to show how they defy certain obstacles to fulfil their ultimate goal of an ideal marriage yet within the accepted norms of tradition.
Works Cited


Among all the novels of Jane Austen *Mansfield Park* (1814) is the most complex novel. The postmodern critics are finding traces of Jane Austen’s farsightedness. Despite the fact that her work is limited to “three or four houses”, yet the fact that she could relate to West Indies and slavery (though insignificant as she allows it to appear), has stirred the enquiring minds of critics like Edmund Said and Lionel Trilling to analyse the novel in the postcolonial perspectives. It also invites criticism that Jane Austen is advocating “incestuous relationship” as the heroine and hero are cousins and practically brought up as siblings under one roof. Although the novel invites many debates, the focal point of this study will concentrate on the human relationship among the parent and the children, the protagonists and the minor characters related to the development of their marriage. The tone and of the novel however is “evidently the work of an older, maturer, woman” (Wiltshire 1998: 59).

The novel stands out differently from the other novels of Jane Austen as the heroine’s story starts from childhood as an outsider in foster home. She is brought to Mansfield Park as a stranger, a destitute child, ignorant and sickly to become the mistress of the estate in the end. Fanny Price, the heroine, is the daughter of the youngest sister of Mrs Norris and Lady Bertram. Fanny is adopted by Sir Thomas Bertram at the insistence of Mrs Norris. She at the end takes over the estate as a worthy member while the original members are dislocated or exiled from it. In the transformation of Fanny’s fortune, it is worthwhile to study her relationship with Edmund, the cousin whom she loves and eventually marries. The parents of the protagonists would be taken up foremost followed by that of the children to show how parental supervision develops the mental as well as the emotional attitude of the off-springs.

The relationship of Sir Thomas Bertram and Lady Bertram is an off-shoot of marriage of physical attraction. They are the parents of the hero Edmund as well as the foster parents of the heroine Fanny Price. Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram have adopted Fanny as her mother, Mrs Price, is the youngest sister Lady Bertram. Lady
Bertram has been a pretty lady but with a small fortune. Sir Thomas, like Mr Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, is a victim of youth and beauty. He has been captured by Lady Bertram’s youth and beauty and she by Sir Bertram’s large mansion, in younger days. The author’s describes their relationship as: “About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be raised to the rank of a baronet’s lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income” (5). They have been attracted by their outward appearance without the concern of the compatibility of mind and reasoning. Such type of captivation does not last long as in subsequent years, Lady Bertram withdraws herself into her own world spending “her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa . . . thinking more of her pug than her children” (20). Least attention is given to the daughters’ education leaving the whole responsibility to her elder sister, Mrs Norris, who being widowed, is under the Bertram’s charity. The pretty face guarantees Lady Bertram’s status and comfort but not Sir Thomas’s pride and zeal for preserving his title, his estate or of grooming their children in their formative stage.

The parental role of the Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram is not compatible and they do not share the responsibility of their children due to their difference in nature, taste and temperament. She is an indolent mother while he is a strict disciplinarian. As his wife takes no part in the running of the household as well as in the nurturing of the children, especially the two daughters, it falls on Sir Bertram to educate the children single handed. Blinded and confused by his own importance, Sir Thomas has a false standard of values. The first thing that has to be maintained in ushering in Fanny into his family is how to preserve in the minds of his daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin. He also at the same time wants to make Fanny remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. “Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different” (12). This obsession is one of his great pre-occupations and Mrs Norris is entrusted to see to the task of such preservation, which at later age proves disastrous.
Lady Bertram’s marriage to Sir Thomas is just like an alliance of convenience and material gain. Her irresponsibility or indifference towards her children’s welfare fits the role of the aristocrat wives who are self content with what they have achieved in marrying rich men. “The aristocratic woman remained defined by her ability to provide her husband with male heirs, and to display his wealth and power to others on public occasion through her own beauty and the expense of the clothes and jewellery that he can afford to dress her in” (Irvine 2005: 10). After giving birth to Tom, Edmund, Maria and Julia, Lady Bertram seems to have fulfilled her duty as a wife without the least concern for the bigger responsibility of nurturing them. Had she taken some responsibility in training her daughters to the ways of the ladies, the darling daughters don’t have to be disgraced so badly. They are bereft of her maternal and feminine values which their education and discipline by the father cannot compensate for. Sir Thomas’s concern about his children, especially the daughters, is that “while they retained the name of Bertram, must be giving it new grace, and in quitting it he trusted would extend its respectable alliances” (21). The role entrusted to Mrs Norris as a surrogate mother is not exercised as Sir Thomas would have expected. She is no better than his wife, except in her hypocritical show of motherly affection for her nieces. She indulges the Bertram daughters without any restraints while she mistreats the other niece, Fanny far beneath her cousins considering that they are the daughters of her own sisters. Mrs Norris treats her nieces according to their dessert which widens the disparity in the minds of the young cousins.

As a protective father, Sir Thomas’s anxiety for his growing up daughters is very admirable. Before leaving for the West Indies, he is anxious of leaving his daughters as they are presently in the most interesting time of teenage. He could not trust Lady Bertram “to perform what should have been her own” (31). He therefore leaves them to Mrs Norris’s watchful attention and his faith in Edmund’s judgement only to be disappointed with the outcome later. In the absence of the strict disciplinarian, the mansion is let loose in the hand of an indolent mother, a liberal aunt and a young romantic clergy, who has yet to learn the rein of sternness. The much protected and cherished Mansfield Park is invaded just as Sir Thomas has
feared. “Two destroying angels came in the neighbourhood, a brother and a sister who . . . lose no time demolishing Mansfield Park. Henry and Mary Crawford . . . are simply themselves, handsome, rich, charming and completely devoid of principles” (Kennedy 1969: 68). The duos who have come to ruffle the tranquillity of the estate are the siblings of Mrs Grant, wife of Dr Grant who is in residence in the Parsonage. From the moment they set foot at the Park, their plan to attack is already laid by their half-sister, Mrs Grant. She has set her eyes on Tom Bertram, the eldest son and heir to the title and property of Sir Thomas, for Mary and Julia for Henry as Maria is already engaged. However, Henry loses no time to charm both the sisters.

The role of mother plays a vital part in developing the mind of young ladies which cannot be compensated by the father or a substitute mother. The Bertram sisters are unable to resist the charm of the flirtatious gallant, Henry. This is where Lady Bertram would have a better command of grooming the young ladies but as she lacks to do so. Theory without practice in education, no matter how accomplished, is dangerous. Lady Bertram has never taken or followed her daughters to any balls or dinners and so has not instilled any sense of propriety or restraints in their conduct. The only education they receive is from the tutor and what have been drilled to them by their father and aunt. They are totally devoid of feminine virtues and are selfish in nature. No sisterly bond, as seen in Jane Austen’s other novels, exists between Maria and Julia but they are rather seen competing to excel each other which lead to rivalry in later stage. Mrs Norris’s partiality for Maria might have been the cause of the siblings’ enmity.

Mrs Norris’s wish to advance her favourite niece’s future has initiated her relationship with Mr Rushworth, a snobbish rich young man. She manages to send her idle sister, Lady Bertram to visit the mother of Rushworth and is proud of having brought the alliance. Both Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris encourage Maria’s affair with Rushworth because he is of some fortune and nothing noble than that. Yet for all her endeavour to promote the welfare of her protégée, Mrs Norris, as a mentor, is defective. She cannot defend Maria’s honour, as a betrothed lady, when she flirts or act with Henry in front of Rushworth. Both Maria and Julia are unable to resist
Henry because: “Nothing in their education has armed them against such man. . . . But they believing the homage and admiration are their due, cannot imagine that any man could trifle with a Miss Bertram” (Kennedy 1969: 69). The impropriety of an engaged lady to take liberty with another man does not seem to matter much to Maria as she is not checked by either of the senior ladies. In vying for Henry’s attention Maria and Julia are jealous of each other and fight for Henry just like they would over a prized doll. Both Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris have no maternal instinct or concern and see nothing amiss in Maria or Julia’s conduct or notice the unsuitability of Rushworth’s nature to that of Maria’s. It is only Sir Thomas, on his return from Antigua, who perceives that Maria does not love Rushworth and so “offers to break off the engagement for her” (Wright 1962: 69). But when she refuses to do so, he too relents to his misgivings. Rushworth’s wealth and status overweighs both the father’s intuition and Maria’s wish for materialistic gain and so Sir Thomas consents to their marriage which later on ends disastrously, much to his shame and regret.

As a benevolent patron and foster-father to Fanny, Sir Thomas plans her future well but just as short-sighted as he is regarding Maria’s fiancé’s unsuitability, his plan for Fanny too fails. He mistakes Henry’s attention to Fanny and approves of the match as Henry is of some independent fortune. In this connection Jon Mee remarks that “He is equally flattered that a man of Henry Crawford’s background is ‘somewhat distinguishing his niece’. . . . Nowhere is Sir Thomas shown to worst advantage than when he seeks to force Fanny to marry Henry Crawford. . . . Romantic delicacy was certainly not to be expected from him” (Mee 2004: 78). He thinks that Fanny as his protégée should obey his wish as her duty. He even arranges a ball whereby the young couple can dance and get acquainted better. This is in keeping with the tradition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where young men and women are introduced to each other in arranged parties by the parents or society. Sir Thomas exhibits a streak of General Tilney’s tyranny, (who evicts the heroine in Northanger Abbey), when Fanny refuses Henry’s proposal. Not used to being refused, and especially by a protégée, Sir Thomas’s ego is deflated and so the temporal expulsion of Fanny is necessary to regain his deflated ego. Sir Thomas
wants her to see the harsh reality of poverty at home and realise the imprudence of what she would be losing if she refuses such an eligible proposal as Henry. Only after Henry elopes with the already married Maria, does he understand the unscrupulous nature of Henry and the logic behind Fanny's refusal to accept him.

In the portrayal of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram’s relationship, Jane Austen seems to be pleading the harmonious blending of mind and soul of the parents in developing the children. Both the parents’ role is needed to groom the young as the lack of one would never make up the want of the other. Sir Thomas, in spite of all his endeavours to groom and educate his children, fails to win their affection and confidence as he is too strict with accomplishing their physical and mental development but not the finer inner virtues as he gets no moral and feminine support from his wife to balance his strict supervision or from Mrs Norris to compensate the want of motherly care for his children.

Fanny Price and Edmund’s relationship starts as puppy-love, a one sided love affair, from the first time that Fanny steps into the Bertram family. Fanny is drawn to Edmund as he has been the only person who welcomes her into the family. She is brought to Mansfield Park at the tender age of ten, a mere child, uprooted for the first time from her family, resulting in her being very timid. She has been small for her age with no glow of complexion or of striking beauty to charm her relatives at first sight. Even before being introduced to the Bertrams she is already made miserable by her Aunt Norris’s admonitions that she should be grateful and well-behaved so much so that “her consciousness of misery was therefore increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy” (14). Aunt Norris tells her how fortunate she is to be accepted by the Bertrams and to be grateful before Fanny even has the opportunity to know what her good fortune means! She might have taken kindly to the new relatives if Aunt Norris, instead of admonishing, had comforted, counselled and prepared her to meet them. But having received none, Fanny encounters her new family as teary-eyed lass with no self confidence but feeling ashamed of herself and longing for home and as such she cannot look up or speak without crying “In vain were the well-meant condescensions of Sir Thomas . . . in vain did Lady Bertram smile and make her sit on the sofa with herself and
pug, and in vain was even the sight of a gooseberry tart towards giving her comfort.”

(14). The way they receive the child on her arrival seems like performing a great
task as they are not familiar with courtesy, the art of showing kindness to anyone
besides themselves. Affection, the parental affection which a child needs, is totally
absent at the Park which is why the Bertram children are afraid of their father and
not close to the parents. Fanny is made more wretched as she is always at the
receiving end of her cousins for her ignorance and simplicity.

Fanny’s love for Edmund develops from the time he shows his concern for
her. Edmund is the second son and the noblest member of the Bertrams. He is quite
sincere in his desire to be ordained, a profession for all second sons who would not
be inheriting the father’s property in the British society. Complying with his
professed vocation, Edmund pities and takes care of his poor cousin. He alone
perceives that she has an affectionate heart, a strong desire of doing right and needs
extra attention and care as she is shy in nature. He provides consolation in time of
Fanny’s distress in the new environment. He manages to win her confidence by
inquiring about her family and finds out that she is missing her home and siblings.
He helps her to write to her eldest brother William who is the closest member of her
family. He not only supplies her with the writing materials but also joins in writing
to her brother. He sends him half a guinea along with the letter. As Fanny is close to
William, Edmunds’s goodwill to him endears him to her all the more.

Jane Austen’s contempt for negligent parents is shown in Fanny’s wish to
write to her brother and not to her mother or father, as expected of any child away
from home for the first time. A child of ten years old missing her brother more than
her parents is a tell-tale of family disharmony. “A large and still increasing family,
an husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good
liquor, and a very small income to supply their wants” (6) is itself self explanatory
of the Prices’ family. Eight children and the ninth expected within a short marriage
of eleven years must be a Herculean task for Mrs Price to manage without the
contribution of the drunkard husband. She even contemplates sending her eldest son
William, still a minor, if he could be useful in Sir Thomas’s West Indian property.
Such are her needs to relieve her siblings as they prove too handful for her. No
wonder she has no special attachment to Fanny to miss her but her son. The childhood experience of Fanny is wound up in three chapters. “Jane Austen wisely makes this adolescent period very short . . . because the distress of childhood in literature are always more intense than those of maturity (Craik 1968: 121). Jane Austen seems to sympathise with a child taken away from parents and home. She might have experienced the ordeal when she was sent to boarding school along with her sister Cassandra. As the power of the upbringing and environment is an important theme to the author, Fanny’s experience is projected intensely so as to arouse sympathy against parents’ alienation from their children during childhood.

Fanny and Edmund’s relationship is cordial right from the beginning. Edmund’s concern has tremendous impact on Fanny’s feeble mind. She gains confidence to withstand anybody and everything at the estate. She no longer dislikes the mansion, is no more afraid of her uncle or Aunt Norris nor saddened by her cousins’ disdain but is happy with the whole lot. Edmund has won her heart but only next to William. With his support Fanny turns out to be a confident pupil and can read, work and write whatever is taught to her by the tutor but not beyond. She is however despised for not knowing her Geography, the Chronology of the British kings and their achievements, or the skill of music and arts which are the pride of her cousin sisters’ talents. This deficiency is the mark of a “difference” (19) between them according to Mrs Norris. Only Edmund is patient with her and shows his concern by “giving her advice, consolation, and encouragement” (22). What starts as a caring brother, for a lonely timid cousin, would blossom into love only in the end when everything turned into a mirage, as his marriage with his intended bride, Mary Crawford, could not take place.

Fanny is almost distanced from Edmund by a tragedy in the family. The newly found paradise is nearly shattered because of Mr Norris. He is the husband of Mrs Norris serving as a clergy in Mansfield Park. He expired just as Fanny reaches fifteen and has grown up to be a pretty lady. It is quite natural for Sir Thomas to assume that Fanny might be needed to stay with Mrs Norris as she is now grown up to keep her widowed aunty company. Moreover the problem at his plantation in Antigua, which replenishes the estate, has compelled Sir Thomas to expect Mrs
Norris to relieve him of keeping Fanny. But it is not to be so. Mrs Norris has no need of company who would only drain her pocket and so refuses to take Fanny much to the latter’s pleasure. Fanny has been literally begging not to be thrown off from the place both to her aunt Bertram as well as to Edmund: “I shall be very sorry to go away” or “I love this house and every thing in it” (25-26). Though she is meek and introvert, Fanny cannot help but express her thoughts as she is thoroughly scared of her aunt Norris.

Fanny has come to love Mansfield Park which has become her home for the last five years. Fanny has been comforted and pacified from her initial anxiety with Edmund’s praise that she would always be a friend and companion to him as she has good sense, sweet temper and a grateful heart which are qualifications he desires in friendship. With such assurance she is contented to accept any situation anywhere. Sir Thomas’s fear, that cousins may fall for each other, proves true as Fanny is secretly in love with her cousin, Edmund. It would not be wrong to agree with the critic’s observation how Fanny has regarded Edmund and the estate. “Fanny Price knows her own mind, and whom she wants to marry, virtually from the beginning . . . But, owing to disparity of station between her and Edmund, no one else wishes it, including Edmund. Opposition to the marriage is thus conventionally located in the father, in Sir Thomas Bertram” (Miles 2003: 34). Fanny has grown to love and cherish both the owner and the place as her own. Sir Thomas has high expectation of marrying his children to principled families to keep up the family status. He has objected to Fanny’s upbringing under his roof right from the start, lest one of his sons’ would be attached to her as she is not a fit match. Ignorant of all the anxieties she creates, Fanny has unconsciously claimed Edmund and the estate as her future husband and home and does not want to be removed from them just like Emma in *Emma* who views Knightley’s Dowell Abbey as her own.

What could have developed from childhood friendship to mutual love in Fanny and Edmund’s relationship is interrupted by the arrivals of the Crawford siblings. Henry and Mary Crawford are orphans brought up by their uncle, Admiral Crawford and his wife who are childless. They are liberally brought up with all the luxuries of life and well accomplished in the ways of the world but lack parental
love and restraint. They leave the uncle’s house after the death of their aunt and when he brings home his mistress. They are both of marriageable age and on the threshold of looking out for eligible partners. The Crawfords are described as “sophisticated, fully aware disciples of a worldly creed to which the Bertram girls merely veer unconsciously, on account of the vacuum left in their education” (Butler 1976: 222). They are attractive as well as callous and take no time to mesmerize the Bertram siblings who are quite innocent and not worldly wise.

Fanny and Edmund’s friendship takes a turn after Mary comes to the scene. Edmund is the least attractive of all Jane Austen’s heroes but a good son on whom Sir Thomas relies for mending the mansion in his absence. He proves his worth in managing the mansion but not at protecting the reputation of his sisters. Fanny finds Edmund succumbing to Mary’s charm day by day though he initially disapproves her speech and conduct. He becomes a regular visitor to the parsonage to listen to her play the harp. While he is engrossed in attendance to Mary at the parsonage, he fails to see that Henry is beguiling his two sisters at home. He therefore cannot defend the impropriety of his sisters’ conduct with Henry which is so obvious for all except the Bertram household. He has also forgotten to care for Fanny for four days as “he is bewitched – so much so that he forgets Fanny’s claims to one of his mares, and allows Miss Crawford to ride it whenever she pleases” (Wright 1962: 134). In trying to please her, Edmund has lent his mare to Mary which is formerly meant for Fanny. Fanny wonders that Edmund should forget and neglect her as though he has been her own property.

Fanny’s childhood adoration of Edmund has given way to love in her matured state but she manages to hide her emotions from being explicit. She becomes possessive of him and wants nobody to get close to him. She is described as “the most extreme of Austen’s paragons, but even more than Mary Crawford, she suffers from envy, jealousy, and anger. The difference is that she knows she so suffers and accordingly exerts pressure against the warps in her character” (Miles 2003: 15). She becomes sick because she “had been feeling neglected, and been struggling against discontent and envy for some days past” (70) and not so much for the lack of exercise. Her sickness is psychological as Karl Kroeber quotes from The
American College Dictionary where the type of her illness is diagnosed as “psychoneurosis” which means “an emotional disorder in which feelings of anxiety, obsessional thoughts . . . and physical complaints without objective evidence of disease . . . dominates the personality” (Kroeber 1971: 73). Fanny’s suffering is brought about after seeing Edmund give Mary a lesson on riding. While waiting for them to bring the mare to her, she watches them at the meadow and sees that Edmund enjoys teaching Mary how to ride. Fanny’s jealous mind takes her to see far beyond her normal vision. The novelist vividly narrates her mental vision in anguish:

She could not turn her eyes from the meadow, she could not help watching all that passed. At first Miss Crawford and her companion made the circuit of the field, which was not small, at a foot’s pace; then, at her apparent suggestion, they rose into a canter. . . . After a few minutes they stopt entirely, Edmund was close to her, he was speaking to her, he was evidently directing her management of the bridle, he had hold her hand; she saw it, or the imagination supplied what the eye could not reach. (64)

Another contributing factor to her sickness is the fault of the inconsiderate aunties who make her cut roses in mid-day sun. If not for Mrs Norris’s stupidity and his mother’s blatant honesty, Edmund would not be aware of their rude treatment to Fanny nor be conscious of his neglect to her. Wakened from his temporary fascination, he renews his attention to Fanny again. None suspects Fanny’s dilemma as her feeling is least expected. She leans on the sofa, retreating that she might not be seen to bear the pain of her mind. The present sickness, though aggravated by the heat of the sun, is not the real cause of her sickness. Far from this possible reason, Fanny is sick because she is plain jealous and pining for Edmund’s attention. Ignorant of being the cause of her sickness, Edmund treats her just as a docile sibling who requires special love and care.

Fanny’s weakness and sickness, in modern perspective, is not an appreciable attribute of ladies to complement her personality but in the eighteenth century British tradition, it has a special attraction for the ladies. It “affirmed the peculiar sanctity of the sick, the weak and the dying” (Trilling 1963: 129). It is her weakness
that always draws Edmund to her side. Recollection of Mary Wollstonecraft’s
outburst, regarding ladies’ weakness comes to mind: “the first care of mothers and
fathers who really attend to the education of females should be, if not to strengthen
the body, at least not to destroy the constitution by mistaken notions of female
excellence; nor girls be ever be allowed to imbibe the pernicious notion that a defect
can . . . become an excellence” (qtd. in Kirkham 1983: 103). Both Trilling and
Wollstonecraft have their points in which the readers might suspect Fanny of
feigning sickness when Edmund finds her lolling up on the sofa. Jane Austen’s
portrayal of Fanny as a sickly heroine however, is not conforming to the traditional
notion but for a different purpose. She is presented as a debilitated person since
childhood as “puny” (12), “inferiority of age and strength” (18), and not strong to
cut a basket of roses without fatigue and headache. These are the physical signs of
Fanny’s weakness but she never tries to feign her sickness to relieve herself of any
work entrusted to her by her aunts. She is sick and seen idling because she is plain
jealous of Edmund’s attention to Mary.

Edmund, the only person who recognises Rushworth’s unsuitability as
Maria’s future husband and who opposes to the staging of the play “Lovers’ Vow”
at the estate during his father’s absence when Tom and his friend Mr Yates
suggested, has also fallen prey to the influence of the Crawfords just like his sisters.
He has dissuaded Tom and his sisters from carrying out the play but when Mary
voices her interest, he relents to it. The rehearsal gives ample chances to enact love
scenes between Henry and Maria, who is now already engaged to Rushwood. The
impropriety of such behaviour of a betrothed lady is overlooked by the upright
Edmund as he too has taken part in the play and is doing the same with Mary.
Mary’s charm blinds him to what has been improper to him earlier. The only
contention between them is his vocation for clergy as Mary does not approve of it. It
is only Fanny who sees the inappropriateness of the play or the renovation of the
rooms to enact it by the merry-makers. She refuses to take part in it. With the return
of Sir Thomas from Antigua, the proposed play comes to an abrupt halt and
Mansfield Park comes back to its former stability but not for long.
Fanny’s love for Edmund is put to test when she is courted by Henry. Just as Mary has come and estranged Edmund from Fanny, Henry has also tried to win Fanny from Edmund. Henry has disappeared for awhile after Sir Thomas’s return, leaving the Bertrams to solve their own problems, and resurfaces to disturb the mansion once again after Maria’s marriage. He has led Maria away from her fiancé into loving him but deserts her when she has fallen for him as though he is wearied of an easy prey. He seems only to have meddled with her life without any serious intention of marrying her. With the Bertrams ladies away, Henry tries to woo Fanny. What he initially starts as a fling to hurt Fanny, as she is not affected by his charm, ends in hurting himself in the end. “When he sets into action his plan to make a small hole in Fanny’s heart he is not only unsuccessful in gaining his effect upon her, but finds that he has a deeper problem that he could have foreseen, a hole in his own heart” (Tave 1973: 167). Sticking to his maxim “I do not like to eat the bread of idleness” (212) in matters relating to his passion of trifling ladies, he is all set to enchant Fanny but to no avail. In the company of Fanny, Henry however discovers a new kind of relationship which is quite foreign to him. He finds a strong family bond and concern existing between siblings as Fanny often speaks of her brother, William.

Though Edmund and Fanny’s relationship has been distanced because of Mary, they still need each other in time of dilemma. Edmund needs Fanny for counselling regarding Mary just as she does for his advice on what to wear for the ball given in her honour by Sir Thomas. Just when needed, Edmund gives a chain to Fanny to wear with her amber cross gifted by William but not before she has gone to borrow one from Mary. In giving the chain, Mary has tricked Fanny into accepting Henry’s gift, for which Fanny later has to suffer embarrassment when Henry gives her a sly glance. On Edmund’s insistence, Fanny wears both his chain with the one taken from Mary, to avoid coolness between his two dearest objects on earth. He confides his love for Mary to Fanny which strikes her like a stab. Fanny cries as she knows that Mary does not deserve his love. She finally relieves herself by the influence of fervent prayers for his happiness. Edmund cannot differentiate between true love and infatuation. He has not realised that his heart belongs to Fanny always.
and so stakes it with Mary. This benevolent heart of Fanny is similar to that of Elinor’s in *Sense and Sensibility* who weeps when she is certain that her beloved Edward would marry Lucy, a cold hearted schemer interested only in his fortune.

Sir Thomas, as a good guardian of Fanny, has arranged a ball to promote Fanny and Henry’s relationship. As it is her first entree the young mind of Fanny is full of excitement. She is baffled when she realises that she is the “belle of the ball” (Grigsby 1986: 118). Always taking a back-stage with her cousins, Fanny could not believe that she is going to head the ball with Henry. “Her happiness on this occasion was very much a-la-mortal” (253), a Cinderella-like tale, from a pauper to becoming a princess but she does not like the Prince, to whom she is intended to pair up for the ball. Though she dances the first part of the evening with Henry, much to her patron’s pleasure, she is not happy. When Henry glances at her necklace with a smile, Fanny is perturbed as she is not aware of its implication. He has contrived with Mary to get the necklace reach Fanny without her suspecting its giver. Henry must have thought that from now on Fanny could be easily won and so plans his next step to please her. He has earlier offered to take William on his carriage the next day which has delighted the poor gentleman as he would have to travel by mail at night. Henry’s plan for the ride together is to introduce William to his uncle, the Admiral with whom he is planning to dine that evening. He is no amateur in the art of beguiling and has laid his path well to win the confidence of Fanny which up till now has been wanting. Despite being Henry’s principle dance partner and being helpful to her brother, Fanny is not happy with his constant attentions. She finds pleasure only when she dances with Edmund at the end of the evening. The ball meant to promote Fanny and Henry’s friendship ends with no favourable result as Fanny is not at all impressed by Henry, no matter how best he tries to win her love.

Meanwhile Edmund, throughout the ball, is full of care with two important events at hand “ordination and matrimony” (235). He is soon to be ordained as a clergy but he is not yet sure of Mary’s consent to become a clergy’s wife. The ball therefore is a trying event for him as his future would be determined at the end of it with her decision. She has indirectly hinted that “She never has danced with a clergyman . . . and never will” (247-48). In a way she is stating that if Edmund is to
become a clergy, she would not be interested in him anymore. Mary sticks to her stand and cannot compromise to Edmund’s inclination and so they have parted at last with mutual vexation.

In his venture to win Fanny, Henry has done much to warm his way to Fanny’s heart. He has successfully gifted a necklace, given William a free ride on his carriage as well as procured his promotion to second Lieutenant through his uncle Admiral Crawford. He seems truly affected by Fanny’s personality and wants to marry her even if she has no penny to her credit. He courts her formally with Sir Thomas’s knowledge. In a way, Henry’s action is commendable as he is promoting the relative of his beloved and deserves to be rewarded. Comparatively, he is more eligible than Edmund in status, wealth as well as in his family connection to win Fanny. In a way, Henry’s action is commendable as he is promoting the relative of his beloved and deserves to be rewarded. Comparatively, he is more eligible than Edmund in status, wealth as well as in his family connection to win Fanny. What Henry does not know is that Fanny cannot be won by favours. Mary is more aware of her feelings when she tells Henry that “I do not think she would marry you without love” (270). He thinks he is in better position than the Bertrams to provide “happiness, comfort, honour, and dignity” (274) to Fanny and rightly so in terms of worldly gain. It is just that his thinking is not at tune to Fanny whose loyalty remains with her relatives. Henry is so confident of winning Fanny that as soon as William’s order is shown, he loses no time to propose to her. In spite of her happiness, she refuses Henry’s proposal on the spot. Even the most appreciable deeds cannot win the heart of Fanny.

In Fanny’s refusal of Henry’s proposal, Jane Austen seems to be stating that there can be no ideal marriage without love. In all her novels we see “that none of her heroines marry a man simply because he is rich. Indeed, they would not accept a marriage which is not based on love and deep affection” (Singh 1995:207). Jane Austen seems to expect even a poor girl like Fanny to have a sense of self respect. Fanny has a mind of her own to discern Henry’s character. She has seen him earlier flirt with both her cousins even when Maria’s engagement is an acknowledged fact. In refusing Henry, not once but twice, she knows she must face the consequence of
Sir Thomas’s disapproval. Her refusal astonishes Sir Thomas. He cannot assume that a person like Henry with his position, fortune and merit could be refused by Fanny who has never received any offer before. Sir Thomas would have given his consent if Henry has asked for the hand of either of his daughters. He therefore changes his technique of persuasion from importunity to kindness. He visits Fanny in her room to persuade her to accept Henry’s proposal and finds that she has no fire in the room. He therefore has ordered to put fire in her room, thinking that he could change her decision with favours. He even entreats his son, Edmund to intercede for him to make Fanny accept Henry. Blind to Fanny’s love for him, Edmund encourages her to accept Henry’s proposal but without success. When an attractive and lively Elizabeth refuses two prospective marriage proposals in Pride and Prejudice, “she stirs up a momentary ripple in the family but is soon forgotten . . . but when Fanny Price refuses Henry Crawford her whole world is shaken and for a time falls apart” (Pickrel 1987: 616). She is accused of “self-willed, obstinate, selfish, and ungrateful” (295) and banished from the estate by her uncle. Fanny’s love for Edmund cannot be replaced even when she knows that he is deeply in love with Mary. There seems no hope of ever receiving his love yet she refuses to marry Henry.

Not realising that she has been banished to Portsmouth for her disobedience Fanny, accompanied by William, looks forward to spending some time with him, her family in order that she gets the comfort of homely atmosphere. But what a contrast it is when she reaches home! She is hardly remembered nor does anybody miss her. From the moment they reach home, talks and reports centre on William and the Thrush, the ship in which William would be sailing. All attention is therefore given to William and not the least to her. The home she longs for turns out to be a house of noise and confusion. “She was at home. But alas! it was not such a home, she had not such a welcome” (355). To Fanny’s disappointment, she finds that she is at home yet does not feel at home as she has no importance in her family. Her father just gives her a cordial hug and forgets totally about her while her mother, having given the preliminary welcome gestures, has no time for her as she busies herself packing for William and thereafter for the younger son, Sam who is due to
sail soon. The younger siblings hardly seem to acknowledge or enjoy her presence except Susan who shares her room and keeps her company. The scene of the Prices’ family seems to correspond to Jane Austen’s own family where Frank, one of her brothers at the age of fourteen, “had already departed to Royal Navy Academy at Portsmouth where, as soon as he was old enough, Charles was to follow him” (Rees 1976: 26). The importance and attention given to the brothers must have sidelined her or her sister’s welfare by their mother.

For Fanny home is where Edmund is. Despite her isolation and constant fear of being at the receiving end of Mrs Norris at Mansfield Park, yet she could like it only because of Edmund’s presence. She finds Portsmouth noisy and squalid, run in disorderly manner, as such she cannot adjust to it. Nothing is done in proper manner; nobody respects one another or gives ear to each other and servants retort back without any propriety to the master of the house. In short the house at Portsmouth is just the reverse of Mansfield Park where everything is proper and everyone is given importance. The house she once dreads becomes the home she misses now! She cannot respect her parents as much as she wants to as Mr Price is negligent of his family, his habits have become worse, his manners coarser by swearing and drinking, and he is dirty and gross. He has no sense of improving himself or his family but idles away in reading borrowed newspaper and the navy list. He shares no responsibility to help his wife or children and no fatherly affection for a long lost daughter. Mrs Price on the other hand is too handful to properly run the house. She spends her days trying to manage the children, the servants and the daily chores exhaust her, bereft of all motherly love and affection. She has just some affection for her sons, especially William, and not much for the daughters, least of all for Fanny whom she hardly has time to talk or understand.

Edmund almost loses Fanny’s affection at Henry’s last attempt to win her. Henry nearly succeeded but for his inconsistency. While Fanny spends her time adjusting to her family, Henry pays her a visit. As a wise planner, he comes just as Fanny would desire a make-over from her deplorable home. It is for this reason that Sir Thomas has sent her home to experience the peril of poverty. In tune with Sir Thomas’s idea, Henry too takes the opportunity to offer himself as a rescue to her
distress. He is introduced as William’s friend and so all affection and respect due to
the favourite son’s friend are given to him. He seems a changed person coming all
the way to be with her poor family. He attends Sunday service with them and goes
out for walk with her father. On the whole, he acts the part of a genuinely good
person. “Henry is more of a chameleon . . . the young man we see on his visit to
Portsmouth – finely bred, manly, tactful and engaging, a conscientious landowner
and devoted friend – is worthy of such a bride as Fanny” (Pickeral 1987: 613). He
could play the part of a gallant suitor with his new character but as it is not his
nature, the act soon gives way. Fanny is slightly moved with his new behaviour and
almost confirms his affection. By this time she is sure of Edmund having won over
Mary and chances are that she might consider Henry. She is however cautioned by
the memory of his past misbehaviour with her elegant and accomplished cousin
whom Henry has dumped so unceremoniously and cannot accept him as her future
husband.

Fanny and Edmund’s marriage is finally decided on account of the
misadventures of Maria and Henry. Edmund has been waiting for Mary’s response
to marry him as a clergy. “Mary is as seriously attracted to Edmund, for all her scorn
of clergymen, whom she sees as a kind of upper servant in the old eighteenth
century way” (Allen 1954: 114). This is where she differs with Fanny who thinks
the clergy profession is man’s best manly energies and Edmund is best suited for the
calling. Mr Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* and Mr Elton of *Emma* are class apart
from the noble calling of the church. They take their vocation as a mechanical
enterprise for earning their bread without compassion for the lost souls. Their
attitude has ignobled the decent profession to which Mary is exposed. While she still
deliberates on the issue, the scandal of their siblings’ elopement takes place. The
news finally opens their eyes to reality. Instead of being horrified at the news, Mary
puts the blame for the scandal on Fanny’s refusal to marry Henry and suggests a
cover up of the scandal. Edmund is appalled at Mary’s nonchalant attitude to the
whole affair. He finally realises that despite all the charm she possesses, Mary is not
the one with whom he could share his future.
Fanny and Edmund are finally summoned to Mansfield Park. Sir Thomas has sent Edmund to fetch Fanny after his break-off with Mary. He needs Fanny to tend to Lady Bertram as Maria’s folly has resulted in Julia’s elopement with Mr Yates. Fanny’s return to Mansfield Park is a real home-coming from her parental home which is alien to her. Only after he breaks off from Mary, does Edmund realise that Fanny is the only one for him. Fanny however knows whom she wants to marry long before Edmund even contemplates on it. It starts right from the time she receives the first kind gesture from him, leading on to her refusal of Henry’s proposal. Fanny proves her worth as she replaces all the women who leave Mansfield Park. “She assumes Maria’s role as the daughter of Sir Thomas; she supplants Mary in Edmund’s affection; and when she moves to the Parsonage, Fanny succeeds both Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Grant as the resident clergyman’s wife. Fanny acquires the lodgings of other women, as well as their familial and social status” (Brodie 1994: 710). What has earlier seemed as stubborn, rebellious, ingratitude and disrespectful, in refusing to marry Henry, has prove her right judgement and all the members of the family now accept her as a worthy daughter.

In the marriage of Fanny and Edmund we see a union of merit rather than of rank or fortune, which have been the cause of the failure in Maria and Rushworth’s marriage. Maria has married Rushworth for what he can afford to give her – “the enjoyment of a larger income than her father’s, as well as ensure her the house in town” (37). Wounded by Henry’s negligence and desertion after trifling with her heart, she marries Rushworth without love. Maria marriage’s is not arranged by her father according to tradition but by her own. “In showing the relaxed, materialistic consistency of Maria’s mind and the moral inertia of her father’s, Austen shows the basic materialism and inertia of the society” (Brown 1979: 20-21). To her dismay, Maria finds no satisfaction in her materialistic gain and leaves her marital home the moment her clandestine affair with her former lover, Henry is discovered.

The Crawfords, for all the good education and attractive manner, seem to lack strong principles. Their failure is a failure of character “owing to their education they lack the principles that would enable them to follow the right” (Allen 1954: 114). If Henry has persisted in his pursuit of Fanny, he might have won her as
his wife. Mary, instead of trying to change the mind and career of Edmund, would have secured a loving and devoted husband in him but her ideal differs from his world. Thus Henry loses Fanny because he cannot resist testing his power on Maria, so also Mary who loses Edmund because of the flippancy with which she reacts to her brother’s elopement with Maria.

Jane Austen seems to convey that to some extent the characters of the children are shaped as the result of childhood upbringing. The family disharmony in the older generation, due to marriage of physical attraction, has adverse effect on the off-springs. The novel gives a message that “authoritarian fathers and passive mothers ruin the family and the young . . . just as surely as male lack of interest in the family can create over-demanding pressure for women as wives and mothers” (Evans 1987: 76). Marriage with the right person with a firm foundation of love, respect and understanding would ensure a happy and steady relationship. Marriage without love cannot withstand disparity of likes and dislikes in a couple’s personality and as such would not be able to lead a harmonious married life.


Jane Austen’s second last novel *Emma* published in 1816 is said to be the greatest novel. Like her other previous novels, it shows her power of writing in educating and reforming a heroine from “self-deception brought on by the shutters of pride into the condition of perception when that pride had been humbled through the exposure of the errors of judgement into which it has led her” (Schorer 1963: 98). Emma is the only heroine who is independent financially coming from an aristocratic background and so has an air of haughtiness. Readers need not worry over her fate like they often do for Jane Austen’s other heroines over their lack of fortune, opportunities and background to be eligible for the heroes. Emma’s confidence, fortune and the high-handedness might have distanced herself from the heroines of Jane Austen’s other novels and this could be the reason why the author has commented that even if no one likes the novel she alone would like it. She had reached forty when the novel was written and had tasted the hard labour of her pen. It has given her confidence, fortune and so to remain single was not a dread anymore. The obsession to get married, seen in her earlier heroines, is no more the passion of the confident and wealthy Emma. In a way the novel reflects some of the autobiographical traces of her real life achievements and views.

An ideal marriage being the theme of all Jane Austen’s novels, she advocates the suitability or compatibility of the partners as paramount in choosing future spouse and not the wealth or status that would only bring material comfort. The novel exposes the precarious condition of what wealth and status can bring about in a marriage. It also studies how bad parenting nurtures the mind of the child besides reflecting the condition of nobility and its drawbacks in mistreating people of lower status and fortune. In short, the novel revolves round a small British society of Highbury. The limitation of the area does not however limit the social set-up as a whole. It exposes the entire snobbish attitude of the gentry which need to be rectified through the kind hearted noblemen like Mr Knightley.
While marriage is the chief concern of all parents in Jane Austen’s novels, as the society is concerned with the improvement of oneself through the marriage alliances with higher status and economy, we have Mr Woodhouse, a widowed father, who would prefer his daughter, Emma to remain single and stay with him always. He is another father-figure like Sir Walter in *Persuasion* in their preference to one particular daughter though in this case Emma is the lone daughter residing with him. Isabella, the elder daughter, is already married before the start of the novel and so Emma invites no sibling-rivalry. Mr Woodhouse is a case of its own. He hates marriage as being the chief cause of “change” in his life. Isabella has been long married and has five children already but he has not yet reconciled himself with the idea to himself. The marriage of Miss Taylor, a governess as well as a companion to Emma, has become another concern to his already nervous nature. She has lived with them for the last sixteen years and has been like a family member. Her marriage has been mourned by the obsessive old man who thinks that “Miss Taylor had done as sad a thing for herself as for them” and laments why “Mr Weston ever thought of her” (3). To Mr Woodhouse, marriage means changes – changes of names, place and relationships – which he disapproves as he wants to retain everything in his ambit, though his desire is fulfilled in the end.

As a parent Mr Woodhouse is not an exemplary model to look up. He condescends to the status of a dependent on his daughter, Emma who takes care of him. He is “much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind and body” (2) and as such he looks older than his actual age. Having lost his wife very early, he devotes all his love and attention to Emma who is his lone company at the large estate. Due to the big age gap, he is no substitute of either his wife or Miss Taylor, the governess, to his daughter, Emma. All his needs have been taken care of by her as she loves her father dearly. The role reversal of parent-child in the Woodhouse household has a very bad effect in the upbringing of Emma right from childhood. Like Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion* who gives free hand to his naïve eldest daughter, Mr Woodhouse too gives free hand to Emma to manage the household but he is fortunate enough to have Mr Knightley, the elder brother of Isabella’s husband, who
is always at hand to check his family business as well as keep an eye on Emma’s childish and sometimes foolish activities. Nothing is outside his purview, and as such Hartfield is not improvised like Kellynch Hall even if managed by a young frivolous Emma who has no other hobby but obsession of match-making besides arranging dinner parties and company for her lonely father every day.

As a landowner, Mr. Woodhouse’s nature and the state of his estate are deplorable. “Hartfield is a gentleman’s residence, and it has a farm attached; but Mr. Woodhouse has nothing to do with its management, and we hear of no tenants. The fact that Emma has a fortune of £30,000 suggests that much of his income comes from investments rather than from the land: hence his status is relatively poor than Knightley’s” (McMaster 1998: 119). A wealthy landowner like Mr. Woodhouse, is expected to give charity to the needy women, improve and nurture young tenants in society as was the practice of the day but his role as a landowner is almost non-existent. He does not look after the land nor keep tenants to enrich the farm. What he gets out of his large estate is just some eggs from the poultry only, which he so vehemently emphasises during dinner to his guests. His regular visitors who could visit him on his term are Mrs. Bates and Miss Bates, (a noble widow and her spinster daughter), and Mrs. Goddard, another widow and a proprietor of a ladies’ school. Whatever he thinks good for himself is recommended and expressed in such meticulous manner that it sounds so awful and repulsive. His most obnoxious nature can be seen at best when he entertains these friends:

Mrs. Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of these eggs. An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome . . . but you need not be afraid, they are very small, you see – one of our small eggs will not hurt you. Miss Bates, let Emma help you to a little tart – a very little bit. Ours are all apple-tarts. You need not be afraid of preserves here. I do not advice the custard. Mrs. Goddard, what say you to half a glass of wine? A small half-glass, put into a tumbler of water? I do not think it could disagree with you. (17)

Not even Mrs. Bennet in Pride and Prejudice would have thought of such details or giving such attentions to Mr. Bingley while entertaining him at Longbourn. It is no wonder that is equated to an “old woman” (Miles 2003: 118). He refuses to shoulder
his share of ideological work as one of the heads of the community but contents himself with the company of old women to share his lonely evenings. He is seen as an effeminate landlord who refuses to head the community as a model of benevolent patron.

Mr Woodhouse’s “horrors of late hours, and large dinner-parties” (14) make him unfit for any male company. This alienates him from the rest of the community and from being influenced by his peers to refresh or widen his mental horizon. If one has to reflect as to why Jane Austen sketches Mr Woodhouse’s character so disapprovingly, it may not be a far cry to presume that the old man is an impersonation of her ailing mother, Mrs Austen whose weak health restricted her movement which in turn saddles her daughters from associating and socialising with their peers. “Like Jane’s mother, he hates to go anywhere; and his hypochondriacal ways could well be a burlesque of those of Mrs Austen” (Halperin 1984: 269). Mrs Austen had a similar nature like that of Mr Woodhouse but outlives her daughter by many years. Despite her own failing health, it is said that Jane Austen never rested on the sofa meant for her mother even when not in use. She told her niece Caroline that is she ever used it “Grandmamma would be leaving it for her, and would not lie down . . . whenever she felt inclined” (Rees 1976:185). Emma’s sacrifice and absolute attention to her father runs parallel to the author’s daily routine to her mother and so the character has special favour personally for her. Jane and Cassandra, her elder sisters, took turns to stay home to attend to their sickly mother while one has to visit relatives on pressing needs of sickness or family problems.

Mr Woodhouse as a parent is selfish and unconcerned. He does not promote his daughter’s future nor concern himself with preserving her reputation or arranging a party where she could meet young friends like Sir Thomas in Mansfield Park and Mr Middleton in Sense and Sensibility who earnestly encourage their daughters or wards to meet young gentlemen to get acquainted with by arranging balls or dinner parties. Instead of advancing his daughter’s welfare, what one sees in Mr Woodhouse is just the opposite. Emma arranges such parties for him which please him but whenever some talk of marriage comes about, he is always crossed. So dependent is he on Emma that she at times, resolves to remain single to be with
her father always and make promises to him that she would never marry. Just as Mr Bennet’s refuses to stir from his study, abdicating his parental authority leading to Lydia’s scandal so also is Mr Woodhouse refusal to stir from his fire-side leading to Emma’s humiliation brought on by her unchecked freedom. Fortunately, as blind to all her faults and with Emma’s wittiness, her misfortunes are never brought to his notice and thus he is saved from any distress. Only his substitute, the dependable family friend and mentor of his daughter, Knightley has to suffer at all her failings and bring her back to normalcy. At the end of the novel, when Emma accepts the proposal of Knightley, her father alleges her for breaching her promise to remain single. Instead of rejoicing for his dear daughter at finding a trust-worthy husband, he grudges her. Only when he is told that they would not move out from Hartfield, he agrees to their marriage as his poultry would then be not stolen with Mr Knightley in the estate.

Jane Austen in exposing the excessive nature of Mr Woodhouse is expressing the lack of parental future plan and supervision of their children who are in constant need of it in order to develop their personality. Mr Woodhouse’s abdication of his responsibility as a father and head of the family gives Emma a free hand to manage the household and his schedules. This liberty gives Emma to work out her plans of meddling with others’ affairs according to her whims and fancy. Her errors and humiliations are therefore the result of faulty parental supervision as much as her assertion to misuse the liberty given to her. Emma’s position in life also is responsible for her high headedness. Being in a position of higher rank in the vicinity and having the confidence of an influential personality, she irrationally exercises her power over those she can control. With no particular occupation to fill her days, she has all the leisure and power to plan whatever she fancies and exerts on those she can manipulate.

Emma and Knightley’s relationship is almost predestined right from the start of the novel. He has come to fill in the void created by the loss of a member in the Hartfield household the evening Miss Taylor is married to Mr Weston. Just as he comes to the Wood-houses at the start of the novel, he is almost omnipresent throughout the novel and ends up taking residence in the end when he marries
Emma. He is the right person to marry her and “Everyone, and everything, points to her marriage to Mr Knightley. It is the most satisfactory of all possible marital outcomes for her father; it is welcomed by her friends; by the community . . . by Mr Knightley, and by Emma herself, if only she would know it” (Miles 2003: 32). It is just that Emma does not know it, owing to a profound lack of self-knowledge. He is a sensible man of about thirty eight whose presence gives Mr Woodhouse a cheerful mood whenever he comes to visit. He is matured enough to nurture Emma who needs a stern hand to moderate her thoughts and actions. Knightley is indispensable to the Woodhouses which Emma realised very late in the end.

Jane Austen lauds men like Darcy and Knightley as good landlords who therefore are most eligible men as future husbands to aspire for. They possess the attributes of good landlords and fulfil the expectations of patrons to their subordinates. “Pemberley and Donwell Abbey – the homes of Mr Darcy and Mr Knightley – are large and valuable estates, on which numerous people depend for their livelihood” (Evans 1987: 59). Just as Darcy is praised for his benevolence and kindness to his tenants or servants and in helping out his loved ones in settling their disputes, Knightley supervises and promotes not only his own estate, Donwell Abbey but that of his tenants as well, especially Martin. He counsels him from farm-improvement to marriage. He takes care of the elderly women, especially the Bateses living on charity, and provides them with his gardens produces, conveyance for their occasional parties and attends to their needs whenever required. He also acts as counsellor to the new trading family like the Coles. Knightley also takes care of his younger brother, John’s relatives. He is tolerant towards Mr Woodhouse’s whims and fancies. Although he disapproves of Emma’s behaviours, he has a soft corner for her. He has to continuously check, mend and supervise her activities. Known to him since childhood, Knightley can detect Emma’s new ploy anytime. He sees her as a lost child needing constant care and wonders “what will become of her” (30). His special concern arises from the fact that she has lost her mother too early to learn anything from her. She has been the mistress of the house since the age of twelve. Knightley is therefore protective about her as her mentor, especially about her obsession of match-making. Such a good and understanding gentleman is
what Jane Austen would recommend for a heroine like Emma who requires a strong as well as a loving heart to tame her unpretentious nature. Knightley’s deeds conform to the period’s practice of acting as a benevolent patron of the community which Mr. Woodhouse can never live up to.

Emma and Knightley share a strong bond of friendship, which is one of the basis of a good foundation of marriage. They have been friends since long and so understand each other. Knightley always teased or reprimanded Emma in almost all her endeavours. They dare to openly express their ideas at each other without any fear of retribution. She is handsome, clever, and rich with a comfortable home. There is nothing to distress or vex her throughout her twenty-one years of life. She is therefore not afraid of remaining single even when it was a precarious situation to remain a maid in those days. She confidently declares that she must see somebody very superior to anyone she has seen yet, to tempt her to change her marital status. Her resolution to remain single is:

I have none of the usual inducement of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing; but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband’s house as I am of Hartfield and never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man’s eyes as I am in my father’s. (67)

The repetition of the subjective pronoun “I”, though it sounds egoistic, can be taken as a sign of insecurity. Having met no one to tantalise her young mind yet, she is defending herself against the simple-minded Harriet, a “natural daughter of somebody” (16) brought up by Mrs. Goddard. At twenty-one she is just at the threshold of her youth and to come out with such determined resolution is dangerous, a sign of a defence mechanism developed automatically. The only man Emma knows is Knightley and as much as she respects and admires him, she does not see him as a prospective husband as she takes his presence for granted. Emma’s mindset is however well perceived by Knightley. He understands that she has never
met anyone to tempt her to change her situation as she is never outside Hartfield. There is no Mrs Allen to take her out to Bath where she would meet a handsome prince as Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*. She is confined to the village of Highbury where there is no one equal to her age or family. No childhood friends, hobby or interest to occupy her formative age as she is always with her father who is too old and feeble to pamper or indulge her in childhood fancy. Always among adults, she thinks and acts as one.

The result of bad parenting in formative stage is well demonstrated in the character of Emma. It is not due to so much of her attributes and good fortune that Emma is dangerous but because of the manner of her nurture. In abdicating his role as a father, Mr Woodhouse has left Emma to imbibe an incorrect way of thinking from reading too much novels from where she derives romantic intrigue and scandal. With no one to keep her company, Emma has been reading since the age of twelve creating a fancy world of her own, as most lonely children do. She cannot differentiate the world of fiction to that of reality and so weaves imaginary dreams to put into action. This dangerous habit often calls for Knightley’s intervention. Unless one sees her through the eyes and hearts of Mr Woodhouse and Knightley, who know her well enough, Emma would be an unpleasant person, when seen from outside. As Emma has nothing to occupy her time, being literally confined indoor attending her father, she has to invent a make-believe world to fill her time. Had the father been active and sociable, she could have been out and about town socialising with her age group or involved in some ladies’ charity work.

In trying to groom Harriet, a willing victim to practise her enthusiastic god-player scheme, Emma is exercising her power of dominance over her junior whom she can easily influence. From the first time she meets Harriet, Emma likes her as she is the only young lady of her age. She takes an instant fancy of mothering her as she is sweet, innocent and docile. She wants to “notice”, “improve”, “detach”, “introduce” and “inform” (17) her and as such treats her just like taking up a project. Wayne Booth has aptly described her character: “[Emma’s] faults are not excess of virtue. She attempts to manipulate Harriet not from an excess of kindness but from a desire for power and admiration.” (Booth 1961: 246-47). The first thing that Emma
does in exercising her authority over Harriet is the speculation of her parentage. She leads Harriet into believing that she might be “a gentleman’s daughter” (21). Emma therefore discourages Harriet’s friendship with Martin, an honest farmer who loves and wants to marry Harriet. Harriet too is in love with him and has proudly accounted for his assets as her future comfort. When she therefore rejects Martin’s proposal, Knightley upbraids Emma for he rightly suspects her role in the affair. He becomes quite disappointed and angry with her. He recommends that Harriet should marry Martin who loves her despite her background. Illegitimacy in those days was scorned by the society, as even now, where good breeding and background of the prospective bride or groom are to be considered before the marriage takes place. Good and prudent family would not want to connect with obscure parentage and fortune. Knightley further warns Emma that if she has sanctioned Harriet’s rejection of Martin in order to match her with Elton, her labour would be in vain for “Elton would not marry indiscreetly” (107). Even if she is nonchalant about what she has done, Emma becomes uncomfortable as she knows that Knightley is always right. Although Knightley is angry with Emma, the close family circle does not allow them to remain enemies for long. The family reunion gives her the opportunity to invite him for dinner and they become friends again.

Emma and Knightley’s differences surface again when she starts heading towards match-making between Harriet and Elton despite the stern warning. Elton is a handsome young man of twenty six or seven, who has a comfortable home, sufficient income besides the vicarage of Highbury. He is considered a good humoured, well meaning, respectable young man without any deficiencies and considered an excellent mate and well-suited for Harriet. Assuming that the marriage of Miss Taylor to Mr Weston is a result of her contrivance, Emma tries to match-make Mr Elton, with her friend Harriet. In trying to bond the two friends to a mutual alliance, Emma gives enough encouragements to Elton to court Harriet whenever possible. These encouragements are taken as strong enough reasons to pay more attention to the ladies by Elton with all elegance and patience of a suitor. John Knightley, (Emma’s brother-in-law), suspects Elton’s attentions as courting Emma but thinking a little too well of herself, Emma is “not very well pleased with her
brother for imagining her blind and ignorant, and in want of counsel” (89). She refuses to be warned and so has to face the music of her folly when the reality hits her.

Knightley’s prediction about Elton comes true when he rejects Harriet as an eligible wife. In the caricature of Elton, Austen’s contempt on the pretentious behaviour of the clergy profession is well depicted. Elton has mistaken Emma’s attention to him as encouraging his design on her and so he is ever courteous and attentive to her comforts at Randall when they have gone for dinner on the eve of Christmas. Having had a good dose of wine at Mr Weston’s, Elton takes the opportunity of their ride home to propose to Emma in the carriage, much to her disgust and annoyance. When Emma confronts him of his earlier attentions to her friend Harriet, he denies saying he would “need not so totally despair of an equal alliance as to be addressing [himself] to Miss Smith” (106). He is filled with resentment and mortification when Emma rejects his proposal. All his earlier good humour, gallantry and civility are lost at once forever. Elton’s dream of marrying has been to enlarge his small domain “and if Miss Woodhouse of Hartfield, the heiress of thirty thousand pounds were not quite easily as he had fancied, he would soon try for a Miss Somebody-else with twenty or with ten” (108). Sure enough, he wastes no time to find a willing wife with ten thousand pound with the advantage of perfect beauty. Elton has gone away to London deeply offended but comes back in no time engaged to Augusta Hawkins with some independent fortune. She has no name, no blood, no alliance and not at all superior to Harriet whom Elton has rejected. Beneath the pretty face is a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself. In a way, “Mr Elton is a fit mate for his wife” (Craik 1968: 138) who has been so ready to have him that vanity and prudence are equally contented. They are complement to each others’ personality in conceit as well as in their status in society.

Elton’s marriage is quite disturbing just like that of Collins’s in *Pride and Prejudice*. His role as a vicar demands that he should set an example of model marriage. Genuine love and concern have been replaced by physical appearance, status and fortune in seeking a wife. His attitude towards Harriet is so contrary to the
teaching of his profession where nobody is higher or lower in God’s eyes. Marriage to him means enhancing his small fortune and vicarage and not a partner to share his vocation. As such if not Emma, he has to marry someone of some means but not a Harriet who is an orphan with no fortune. He takes just four weeks to change his heart from Emma to Augusta Hawkins, just like Collins who secures a willing wife, Charlotte within three days of being rejected by Elizabeth. Contrary to their profession, both Elton and Collins exhibit inclination towards materialistic gain in their outlook of marriage, which defiles the sanctity of marriage. They fail to be role models for the young generation to take up the noble profession by abusing the very vocation they profess to belong. Besides learning a good lesson that Elton’s gallantry has been only to win eligible wives but not the soul of the poor, Emma loses her face with the most trusted friend Knightley who has warned her about Elton.

Emma and Knightley’s another bond of contention again arises when Emma once again puts her match-making obsession into practice. Emma’s romantic mind has been working ever since she has first heard of Frank Churchill, the son of Mr Weston, adopted by his maternal uncle, Mr Churchill. In the introduction to the novel, it is stated that “Miss Woodhouse is the mistress of her home and her village but not quite the mistress of her own imagination. Indeed her fancies are sometimes conceived as independent entities intent on mischief” (Bradbury 2007: vii). This is true of Emma’s nature. Even before meeting Frank or knowing him personally, she fancies that “if she were to marry, he was the very person to suit her in age, character and condition. He seemed by this connection between the families, quite to belong to her” (95). She has already fixed her mind on him and when Frank appears suddenly earlier than expected, Emma’s anticipation does not disappoint her and takes an instant liking to him just as Elizabeth has been charmed by Wickham in their first encounter in Pride and Prejudice. Frank’s good mien, spirit and liveliness blind Emma to perceive the intimacy between Frank and Jane, the niece of Miss Bates. Even when Knightley hints at the attraction between them, Emma does not believe as Frank joins her in criticising Jane, which she later realises that he has been only obliging her vanity. She has unnecessarily alleged Jane of having an affair
with Mr Dixon which Frank allows her to believe willingly even though he is secretly engaged to Jane. The affair is kept secret as part of the mystery of Jane Austen’s style of capturing our attention. It also is the result of parents’ restraint to promote their children’s welfare leading to the secrecy and misunderstanding in their relationship to society. Mrs Churchill, the foster mother of Frank, is against the alliance of Jane and Frank and as such their intimacy cannot be openly made known to the public.

Emma and Jane’s relationship could have been a cordial one and educative for each other as they are of the same age though of different temperaments. Emma bonds well with Harriet as she could dominate her and mould her according to her wishes. Jane, on the other hand, is an accomplished lady, if not a little better than Emma, and not to be easily intimidated by Emma. The dislike seems to stem from Emma’s inferior complex as her accomplishments are less refined than Jane’s. Emma acknowledges her drawbacks and regrets her idleness in childhood. Only when she confronts her superior, does Emma realise her limitations and starts practising the piano vigorously for an hour and a half after seeing Jane play so well. The lapse of consistency in discipline of parents’ role is detected here as no effort to instil “industry and patience” (27) has been enforced during her childhood. Had she been supervised by her father in her formative stage as Jane has been by her foster parents, Emma’s extraordinary talent and mind would have been much superior to that of Jane’s, comparing their situation in life. To add to the already wounded soul, when Mrs Weston hints at a match between Jane and Knightley, Emma’s reaction is instant: “Dear Mrs Weston, how could you think of such a thing? . . . Mr Knightley must not marry! You would not have little Henry cut out from Donwell” (178). Emma hates to think of Knightley being married just like her father.

Unconsciously Emma has been possessive of Knightley just as he is of her without realising the truth themselves. Emma has reserved Knightley not only for herself but for her whole family. Henry is the elder son of John and Isabelle Knightley. He is the heir apparent to Knightley’s property if not married. Emma always considers Knightley and his estate, physically and mentally, as her property. Without so much thought of marrying him herself, Emma does not want Knightley
to marry at all. She wants him to be the same person to her, to her father, and to the entire world who needs his help. Knightley too has been keeping Emma as his future wife right from the age of thirteen. The fact that he keeps track of her moves is to prevent her from any dangers. He is jealous when Emma shows affection to Frank and hurt when Emma mistreats Jane or her aunt Miss Bates who deserves better treatment from her. He is always at hand to reprimand or praise her for her actions. They both think that they are caring for each other as they are literally a family and it takes a rival to show that they do not feel so much like “brother and sister” (266) after all for each other.

The relationship of Emma and Knightley reaches its climax at the Box Hill. Emma’s fascination with Frank has dwindled down as he does not live up to her expectation. She is in fact happy that she is indifferent to him yet she flirts with him excessively at the Box Hill tour. Frank, like Wentworth in *Persuasion*, is venting out his anger at Jane by pretending to like Emma but the foolish Emma unknowingly plays to the tune of Frank’s masquerade by whispering and making fun of others, especially of Miss Bates. Miss Bates is highly mortified when Emma treats her so unfeelingly. Emma, as a member of the polite society, has breached that code of propriety by being disrespectful to her senior. She also hurts Jane by unknowingly flirting with her fiancé. Knightley, once again has to reprimands her for her rude treatment to Miss Bates who deserves her love and respect. Emma admits her mistakes and cries herself through the journey home before she could apologise to Knightley. “How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued!” (303). If not for Knightley’s reproof, Emma might not be aware of her lapse of propriety towards Miss Bates.

The Box Hill episode estranges Emma from all her good friends. The incident leads to discord with the Bateses resulting in return of her gifts sent to them. It affects Jane as she has fallen sick in remorse, decides to take up the governess post which she dislike earlier and finally breaks up with Frank to whom she is engaged secretly. Miss Bates is happy to be reconciled but not Jane. The worst outcome of the incident is Knightley’s self exile to London. He is gratified that at
least his chiding has motivated Emma to regain good relationship with the Bateses. In appreciation of her goodwill, he takes her hand and almost kisses it but drops as though he is suddenly conscious of his emotion. He leaves Donwell thinking he has lost Emma to Frank. He cannot remain to see Emma making a fool of herself over Frank with “such permitted, encouraged attentions” (347).

Meanwhile at Hartfield, Emma’s realisation of her love for Knightley comes as a dart of an arrow when Harriet confesses that she is in love with Knightley. Emma’s creation of a new Harriet has taken a worst turn when she poses as a threat to her love-life. Harriet has been meaning to ask Emma if her sanguine hope of nurturing the idea of loving Knightley is appropriate. Emma, assuming her new love to be Frank, cautions her to be observant lest she be disappointed like last time with Elton. She never imagines that her Knightley would be claimed by anyone, least of all by Harriet. With the realisation that Harriet is aspiring for Knightley’s love, she banishes her from Hartfield. Karl Kroebner comments that “Emma’s relation to Harriet . . . can be regarded as analogous to that of Frankenstein and his monster” (Kroebner 1971: 78). Having accomplished his task, Frankenstein regrets the creation of the monster. He takes almost two years to infuse life into an unanimated body but on completion “the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled [his] heart” (Shelley 1994:55). He knows his creation would be dangerous as it is methodically created and would be beyond his control. True to his apprehension, the monster proves disastrous to his personal life as it kills his bride and kinsmen. Similarly, Emma also regrets nurturing a false Harriet as she has threatened to go beyond her control and take the love of her life, Knightley. Emma regrets her blunders, taking the blame for all the mischiefs has been all her doings. Fortunately Emma’s Harriet is not a monster but a docile amiable creature who can be easily won over to her former beau, Martin. An unsteady teenager who “could be in love with more than three men in one year” (362), despite Emma’s greatest fear, at last proves no threat to Emma’s happiness.

The old maxim that “absence makes the heart go fonder” proves true in Emma and Knightley’s relationship during the short break where he has gone to London. He has left to learn to be indifferent to Emma’s charm but to a wrong place.
“There was too much domestic happiness in his brother’s house; woman wore too amiable a form in it. Isabella was too much like Emma” (347). Instead of finding peace at London, he misses Emma all the more. When the news of Frank and Jane’s engagement is declared, he rushes back to Highbury to comfort Emma, whom he thinks would be hurt by the news. With Knightley out of the scene of Hartfield, Emma too misses him. She now realises how indispensable he has been to her family. With great remorse, she recollects how he has mentored her ways through his advice and admonitions. She has taken him for granted all these years as he is always there for her. Emma blames herself for driving him away. As she muses in loneliness, Knightley comes home just like the evening he walks in on the day of Miss Taylor’s wedding when everyone has gone and Emma is left with her father alone. What could have relieved these two lovers from their anxiety instantly is delayed by their misinterpretation of each other’s thoughts. They presume that each is thinking of his or her beloved – Emma of Frank and Knightley of Harriet. When the misunderstanding is clear, Knightley finally bares his heart to Emma. He however understands Emma’s dilemma to an immediate marriage and solves it by proposing his move to Hartfield instead of supplanting the fragile health of her father. Such benevolent heart and caring attention cannot be refused even by the obnoxious Mr Woodhouse, who hates marriage to take place among his near and dear ones. Jane Austen seems to employ this style of separating the lovers for awhile in almost all her novels. The separation is needed to understand one another’s personality as well as to educate oneself to reform their errors before taking the pledge of marriage.

Emma’s earlier stand to remain single is simply because of her possessive and loving father who gave her enough space for her childish activities and freedom from any restraints. In justifying Emma’s role, Edmund Wilson remarks: “Emma is not interested in men except in the paternal relation. Her actual father is a sickly old woman: in their household it is Emma herself, who motherless as she is, assumes the function of the head of the family; it is she who takes the place of parent and Mr. Woodhouse who becomes the child (Wilson 1963: 38). If not for Mr Knightley who always checks and rebukes her whenever he sees her action going overboard, Emma
would have landed up like Elizabeth Elliot in *Persuasion* and remain a snob in the society. As he has presided over all her social development she accepts him as a substitute father all along until Harriet claims him to be her admirer. It takes a situation like this to jolt her out of her indifference towards Knightley and admit her love for him. She finally marries him and brings him into her own household, where his role is to reinforce Mr Woodhouse. The role-switch of parent and child is harmful in the development of a sibling’s mental set-up and calls for a strong head to cure the fixation. Emma, despite her haughtiness, is a sensible lady and mends her ways through the guidance of Knightley whom she has been admiring since childhood. She loves him without realising it and only when a contender surfaces does she realise that he is the right person for her to marry.

We see a change in tradition when Mr Knightley moves in to his bride’s home as a responsible and respectable landlord. Out of his love and concern for his beloved’s anxiety not to desert her father alone, he performs a very unconventional action which might taint his reputation. Julia Brown remarks that the hero by moving into the environment has becomes a kind of father to her own father. Emma’s marriage also proves the individual’s choice “to collapse time through incestuous relationships and to make one’s world smaller instead of larger. Marriage in Jane Austen is a form of cooperation that has both regressive and progressive tendencies; either way, the personal choice is that initiates it is the nexus between the past and the future in the moral life of the individual” (Brown 1979: 15). Knightley, in deciding to move in to Emma’s house, is taking the extreme risk of demeaning his manhood in such a strong patriarchal society but his action proves his courage to defer the norms in order to fulfil his beloved’s precarious situation. This is possible only because of the great strength, resolution and presence of mind of Knightley. It also demonstrates “that strength of character in his care and cultivation of Donwell, an estate which he has, in a sense, been ‘saving’ for Emma as she grows from infancy to adolescence and maturity” (Evans 1987: 21). No wonder Emma has been protecting it from all contenders of Donwell Abbey by her wit and blatant outcry at any hint of its occupancy. Knightly’s supervision of Emma can be compared to Henry’s to Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*. Both are much older than
the heroines and can overlook their errors with compassion as they are virtually innocent in the ways of the world.

The minor characters who exhibit harmonious marital relationships are the families of John Knightley and the Westons. John and Isabella Knightley’s married life gives a picture of a homely and harmonious country family. The need to expose children to the customary visits to families and neighbours is seen when Isabella would take all five children to visit her friends whenever at Highbury. They properly divide their time spent between Hartfield and Donwell and so the children feel at home at both the parents’ houses without any scruples. John loves to be always with his family and is concerned with whenever slight mishap is evident when away from them. He reluctantly leaves his children to attend Mr Weston’s dinner party on the eve of Christmas to oblige his father-in-law who has consented to attend the party thrown in his honour. Mr Woodhouse, who hardly leaves his fire-place, for once is intent on going despite the bad weather and as both his wife and sister are also attending it, he has to accompany them with great dismay. He is irritated and grumbles at the “folly of not allowing people to be comfortable at home, and the folly of people’s not staying comfortably at home when they can” (90). Time away from his children is a great sacrifice to him. John and Isabelle’s family life and their “domestic happiness” (347) with children and relatives inspires the elder Knightley to long for a family of his own.

Mr Weston finds happiness for the second time when he meets the eligible Miss Taylor. His earlier marriage with Miss Churchill has been disastrous as she cannot compromise her marital status from that of her maiden status. They have married against her family’s approval as Mr Weston was just an army captain, too low for the Churchill’s standard but she married him as she had her own independent fortune. The disparity of fortune between her former and present condition being too great, and despite loving her husband who indulges her beyond his means, she “wanted at once to be the wife of Mr Weston, and Miss Churchill of Enscombe” (9-10). Their marital life is short lived as she expired not long after the birth of Frank. His wife’s indulgence leaves Mr Weston poorer than before with their sickly child. The Churchill couple, who are childless, has adopted Frank as
reconciliation between the two families. Later Mr Weston changes his profession, becomes rich, owns land and house and marries a fine lady of intellect though without any fortune. In Weston we see the easy abdication of the child due to financial constraint but his marrying Miss Taylor and enjoying his new situation seems to reflect Jane Austen’s advocacy of marrying at a later age when one is competent in age, status and sound in wealth to start a family. Marrying too young with no parental approval, no financial stability and plunging into a family life on the basis of just youth and beauty is futile as attraction of the physical without mental compatibility soon wanes leading to marital disharmony.

Through the exposure of different marriages we see that Jane Austen calls for a steady relationship that can weather all odds. The relationship that can withstand hardship, endure one’s limitation, compliment each other’s personality and most of all forgive one another’s faults is the expression of true love and concern. Where there is love and respect, all shortcomings of a partner can be borne and amended. The novel also shows that parents ought to groom their children in the right direction when they are still in their in their formative stage to save them from future dangers. Besides the plea for building a good familial atmosphere, the novel exposes the small world of a society which reflects the British tradition and practices. The way the novel is written in showing Emma’s error, the self centred hypochondria of Mr Woodhouse, the position of women in society, the hidden relationship of Frank and Jane “suggests that had she lived, Jane Austen might have written a very distinguished detective novel” (Rees 1976:172).
Works Cited


(vi) **Persuasion**

The last but not the least of Jane Austen’s novels, written after she crossed her fortieth year between 1815 and 1816, is *Persuasion*, the most poignant of all her novels. It was published along with *Northanger Abbey* after her death in 1817. The novel lacks the brightness of *Pride and Prejudice*, the gaiety of *Northanger Abbey* and the high spirit of its preceding novel *Emma*. It is closer to the sanguine but controlled emotion shown in the heroines of *Sense and Sensibility* and *Mansfield Park*. The title of the novel itself is self explanatory. The heroine has been persuaded at nineteen to give up her man at the advice of her mentor but not persuaded enough to give up loving him altogether even after eight-and-a-half years of separation which eventually persuades her lover to marry her because of her constant love and devotion.

In exploring the relationship of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, it would be worthwhile to study the influence affecting their earlier relationship which was determined by the elders other than their own decision. This is where the role of parents, guardians, family and friends comes in. The neglect or indulgence of parents has a great impact on the psyche of the children even far beyond adulthood where they suffer either from superiority or inferiority complex thereby affecting their own family harmony. In this chapter the study of relationship of the parents of the protagonist would be analysed to show how it affects their siblings. The relationship of the protagonists would also be studied to show how they overcome their parental or elders’ restraints on their union as also their steadfast commitment to each other through all the hurdles in their love-life.

The marriage of Sir Walter and Lady Elliot, parents of Anne Elliot, is based on purely physical attraction. Sir Walter has married a lady far superior to himself because of Lady Elliot’s infatuation. She has been captivated by his good looks and status, which in later years prove vanity and nothing else. She has tried her best to make up his deficiency but to no avail. The marital bond of Sir Walter and Lady Elliot runs parallel to that of Mr and Mrs Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* but in
reverse role of the couple. “Mr Bennet had married a foolish wife, ensnared by . . . her ‘softness and sweet attractive grace’. . . . Lady Elliot . . . made a comparable mistake . . . ‘the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot’” (Kirkham 1983: 145). Just as Mr Bennet has been disillusioned at his choice of a pretty face, Lady Elliot too has been a victim of a handsome mien. The consequence of her infatuation proves terrible for her. She is too sensitive to find pleasure in laughing at her husband. “She had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children, to attach her to life, and make it no matter of indifference to her when she was called on to quit them” (4). Finding no solace from her husband, she manages to keep up the relationship by taking pleasure in her children and dear friend, Lady Russell. The result of seventeen years of hiding or attempting to prevent the effects of his foolishness has taken its toll, leading to her early death. She must have suffered a nervous breakdown.

Sir Walter has been described as a remarkably handsome man in his youth and at fifty-four is still a very fine man. He is concerned about his personal appearance more than few women could think of themselves. It is no wonder that Margaret Kirkham compares Mary Wollstonecraft’s opinion about fashionable women to Sir Walter who cares more about his mirrors than his estate or his daughters. In the treatment of his children, Sir Walter has breach the moral code of conduct as a parent. He has three daughters - Elizabeth, Anne and Mary but favours only one of his children and neglect of the other two which has adversely effected the minds of the daughters. Elizabeth is the eldest, the prettiest and the favourite of Sir Walter. He is partial to her as she “reflects him” (Tanner 1986: 209). He prefers Elizabeth because she is very much like him. She has been just sixteen when Lady Elliot expired. For thirteen years Sir Walter has indulged her to do the honours of a hostess at home, letting her follow Lady Russell, (a friend of Mrs Elliot and mentor to the children) to open balls in the scanty neighbourhood, taking her on trips to London which eventually leaves her to face the “approach of the years of danger” (6) with regret. Her earlier attempt to marry the junior Mr Elliot, the presumptive
heir to her father’s inheritance, having failed Elizabeth finds nobody fit to marry. She is still single at twenty-nine with no prospect of marriage in the offing.

On the other hand, Anne, the middle daughter, though favoured and mentored by Lady Russell, has no sense of belonging to her family. Sir Walter takes no interest in her as she does not inherit his looks and so has no hope of ever reading her name in any page of his Barontage. She is of some importance only when needed to do odd jobs like bidding farewell to all her neighbours when the family moves out or when her youngest sister’s children are sick. Sir Walter’s youngest daughter Mary is a neglected child. She is not a favourite child of her father as she is not as attractive as her elder sisters. She is given some importance in her father’s eyes only after she gets married to a landlord’s son, Charles Musgrove. Her name and marital resume has entered his Barontage.

As a landlord, Sir Walter is very proud of his estate, Kellynch Hall and also keeps a Baronetage where he reads his own history with an interest which never fails to please him. The way he pages through the Baronetage in search of his own name and lineage or contemplating his reflection in his mirrored filled room “is a psychological portrait of the dissociation of the self” (Brown 1979: 140). He seems to be a man in search of an existence, in search of some exterior proof of his existence in the world. Much as he prided himself of the heritage, he does nothing to improve the condition of the estate. Juliet McMaster quotes Lionel Trilling’s statement: “‘Snobbery is pride in status without pride in function’”. This applies perfectly to Sir Walter Elliot who wants all the privileges and prestige belonging to his baronet, but not the responsibilities’” (McMaster 1998: 129). The estate has been run with moderation and economy in Lady Elliot’s lifetime but has exceeded his income at the hands of his naive daughter Elizabeth’s hands. In spite of the mounting debts, he would never disgrace his name by selling the estate or parts of it to recover his debts. He wants to retain and pass it on to his heir, Mr Elliot as per the tradition. He asserts that “The Kellynch estate should be transmitted whole and entire, as he had received it” (8). Jane Austen here is exposing how in the name of tradition one has to cling on to it even without the means to it.
In describing the deteriorating condition of Sir Walter’s wealth, Jane Austen is exposing the vanity of the declining status of the aristocrats who are comfortable with the status and heritage and do nothing to maintain or improve their property. She is also warning that unless they gear up from their stupor and act like Knightley or Darcy, whose responsibilities as landlords have been lauded, they would soon lose their honour to the new breed of the navy. “The landlord is bankrupt. A new social order, born of the war, has come into being” (Southam 1976: 7). The emergence of the navy officers as a class overthrowing the landed gentry is seen in the removal of Sir Walter from his estate and occupation of the same by Admiral Croft, a naval officer. Sir Walter has to change his opinion of the navy as a “means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honour which their fathers and grandfathers might never dream of. . . it cuts up a man’s youth and vigour” (15). Sir Walter has to condescend to the navy profession in order to avoid complete bankruptcy and loss of the estate. The only option left for him to retain his honour and the estate is to lease out his estate and move to a humbler dwelling to lessen his expenses without altogether giving up his former lifestyle. The navy profession which is gaining popularity in status as well as in wealth due to the Napoleonic Wars cannot be accepted by the older generation including Sir Walter.

In short, Sir Walter is not a role model of a parent in the novelist’s estimate and advocates a more understanding and affection for his children and those who need his advice. His indifference causes psychological insecurity, snobbish attitude and timidity in his children’s characters. Lady Russell has a greater role than Sir Walter in nurturing his children as a surrogate mother. What she could have done with Elizabeth beyond the preliminaries is taken over by the father and so she could not influence her much. Mary was married quite young and so there was little she could do with her. Only Anne, who is nobody to anyone, is her sole ward and responsibility. She befriends Anne as a mother and always counsels her in every stage of her life. She loses her authority only when Anne distances herself from being too dependent after the initial catastrophe with her love-life with Wentworth.
The marriage of Anne and Wentworth is an ideal union of constant love which has stood the test of time and is a proof of a lasting relationship that has surpassed all hurdles of rank, class and economy. It also “represents a triumph of individual integrity over social form” (Cox 1987: 335). They have been separated by the voice of reason by Anne’s mentor, Lady Russell and her family due to difference in fortune and rank. They have been in love and engaged some eight years back before the start of the novel. Due to youth and uncertainty of their future they have been estranged physically but not in spirit as they are still strong in their love for each other. Their relationship is known only to some and has been forgotten already but not by the new acquaintances when they meet again in new situation.

To take into account, the first love affair, Anne has just been nineteen years old girl, “with all claims of birth, beauty, and mind” when she first met Wentworth. She has been an extremely pretty girl at that time with modest and gentle taste and feeling. As she is “nobody” to both her father and sister, she has depended wholly on her mentor and friend Lady Russell for everything in life. Wentworth then has been a remarkable young man of twenty-three with a great deal of intelligence, spirit and brilliancy. “His sanguine temper, and fearlessness of mind” (21) and his brilliant, head-strong character are seen as an aggravation of the evil by Lady Russell. Having no relatives nearby, he has stayed at the Monkford for half a year before he being commissioned to a regular post. He has a brother living overseas and a sister married to a navy officer, Admiral Croft. When Anne and Wentworth (young, attractive, unattended as they were) meet, they are naturally drawn to each other and soon become friends, fall in love and get engaged to each other.

The eligibility of a man depended so much on property and income that for someone like Wentworth, who has just been recruited as a naval officer but with no fortune, is not considered a handsome catch for Anne, a well-bred daughter of Sir Walter, a baronet. Wentworth is confident of his future prosperity with the aspiration of owning a ship and striking a fortune in life to make Anne happy. It is not an unfounded dream as Napoleonic war was still afoot and he already been recruited as a navy officer, the future holds no dearth of gaining fame or fortune to the young gallant-in-love. Such confidence has been enough for Anne but not to Sir Walter or
Lady Russell. He is too much of “a modern-minded man from the conservative point of view” (Butler 1976: 275). With just his ideal notion to do well in near future, Wentworth has impulsively demanded that Anne should marry him without any solid foundation on his profession or any economic support to start a family. When he thus applies to Sir Walter for Anne’s hand, the response has been that of great astonishment, great coldness, great silence which explicit his unspoken disproval as he regards the alliance very degrading. As a father, he cannot consent to an alliance without a sound economy to start a family. Lady Russell too disapproves the marriage as she sees Wentworth’s fearless ambition as a threat to her protégé. With no hope of attaining affluence, uncertain profession, no connexions to secure further rise, she has been sceptical of Wentworth’s career. She thinks Anne too young “to be snatched off by a stranger without alliance or fortune; or rather sunk by him into a state of most wearing, anxious, youth-killing dependence!” (20). She has therefore persuaded Anne not to continue the engagement.

Anne Elliot, young as she was, has paid heed to her friend and mentor whose advice is valued as that of a mother’s love and right for her future. She would have been able to withstand or even defy her own father’s opposition and married Wentworth but for the prudence of Lady Russell’s advice.

She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing – indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. But it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. . . . The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting – a final parting. (21)

Wentworth has blamed Anne for not having enough trust in him and left the country in anger. From all that Anne could hear of him over the years, true to his aspirations, he could manage to achieve all that he has promised her within the first two years in service. Since then she has been regretting the parting as she experiences the bitter taste of a broken engagement and so resolves to stay single even when eligible proposal comes her way. On the other hand Wentworth strived hard to make his dream come true and has succeeded too. The drive of proving himself worthy of his
promise as well as the frustration of being rejected for his low status in life must urged him to excel and indeed he achieves it beyond his expectation.

Lady Russell’s interference echoes Jane Austen’s idea of wasting one’s life and vigour by marrying too young in life as was the practice of the day. Her disapproval of immature young lovers marrying with no stable income or future plan is reflected in the marriages of Lydia-Wickham in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, Mr and Mrs Price in \textit{Mansfield Park}, and Mr and Mrs Churchill’s first marriage in \textit{Emma}. Considering the time and age when both Anne and Wentworth have wanted to settle down, Lady Russell’s caution is not altogether wrong. Had they been married, he would have been saddled and too encumbered with family responsibilities to achieve his goal. Anne too would have been worried sick with his long absence or be burdened with family at such a tender age. Anne’s only regret is breaking the engagement for she believes that “she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement than she had been in the sacrifice of it” (22). If they had continued on with their engagement and waited for the right time like Eleanor (the sister of the hero, Henry Tilney) and her beau in \textit{Northanger Abbey}, such unpleasant situation would have been averted but they were too young to do. So they parted with Wentworth leaving the country in consequence and Anne left with regret, loss of early bloom and spirits. Their relationship ends with no prospect of a possible reunion.

Wentworth re-enters into Anne’s lonely life after eight and half years. Many changes have taken place during the long span of their break-up. Anne has grown up from the irresolute teenage to a matured lady who has not forgotten her first love. There has been no one to severe her affection from Wentworth even when there is no hope of ever seeing or receiving him at Kellynch Hall. She does not allow a second attachment during the years of separation although Charles Musgrove, the heir to a landed property, has proposed to her when she has reached twenty two, an age when every lady would have been most obliged to enter a marriage alliance. Lady Russell has wished her to accept him to live peaceably away from the partialities and injustices at her father’s house but Anne refuses to be affected by her for a second time. Thus she remains a spinster at twenty seven, with no beauty to
flaunt her countenance and leading a life akin to that of an old maid, with no pleasure to enjoy any merry-makings, or a like a “widow who has lost her fiancé and who now shares the company of widows” (Brodie 1994: 699). This “widowed” state distinguishes her from Jane Austen’s previous heroines in Laura Brodie’s opinion. But Jane Austen’s portrayal of Anne is that of a neglected daughter and a repentant lover, who misses her lost love and not that of a pathetic state of a widow. Even if she prefers the company of Lady Russell or Mrs Smith (both widows no doubt) it is so because they are her mentor and good friend. Her passive mobility and lack of interest in gaiety is because she prefers to be the source of pleasures for the young people by playing the piano or offering her service to look after her sister’s children. It is her good nature and generosity and not the loss of enthusiasm of a widow that makes Anne apparently a dull character. Beneath that subdued appearance is the enduring and strong personality of a romantic and committed human soul, true to her beloved and demand of society. It is while taking care of her sister, Mary at the Uppercross Cottage, that she encounters Wentworth after their break-up.

When Wentworth resurfaces again, he comes as a matured gentleman with fortune. He is no more the youth of yesteryear but a distinguished person who has been commissioned and gained early promotion in the navy. He has managed well for himself and has acquired wealth through the successive captures in the war. He is no more a person to be ignored or neglected. The once great and wealthy Sir Walter of Kellynch Hall has become bankrupt and a “nobody” while Wentworth has become a “somebody”, a captain with great fortune. He is regarded as an important person whose presence is to be solicited by Elizabeth Elliot: “The past was nothing. The present was that Captain Wentworth would move about well in her drawing-room” (178). Moreover, he is the brother of Mrs Croft whose husband has taken Kellynch Hall on a lease. Wentworth has been turned on shore after being at sea continuously for the last eight years. He is “ready to fall in love with all the speed which a clear head and quick taste could allow” (47) just like his younger days of eagerness. Despite his resolution to marry anyone, at the back of his mind, he must have Anne all the time or else why would he come so soon the moment he got the
chance to return to Somersetshire to visit his sister? He is still affected by Anne though he pretends to be indifferent as much as she is by him.

The first anticipated meeting after their long separation takes place at Uppercross Cottage where Anne has visited Mary before leaving for Bath to join her father and Elizabeth. She learns of Wentworth’s arrival at Kellynch when Admiral Croft informs Mary. Mrs Croft’s sudden query if she has been the friend acquainted with her brother makes Anne feel “electrified” (37) with shock. The mere mention of Wentworth’s name sends deep sensation to her great strength and courage to remain calm. Since then she has been anticipating the inevitable meeting. The meeting takes place briefly when Wentworth drops in to wait for Charles before setting out for shooting. The short encounter does not exceed beyond an exchange of bow and curtsey. But Anne loses her senses and feels as though the room is “full of persons and voices” and heaves a breath of relief: “‘It is over! It is over!’ she repeated to herself again, and again, in nervous gratitude. ‘The worst is over!’”(45). She is pleased that the anxiety of first encounter is over. She is however agitated and afflicted when she sees him on easy footing with the Musgrove ladies. She now realises that she is nothing to him but is content of that brief moment where their eyes meet, Anne feels connected to him. “They have been once more in the same room” (46). Even if Wentworth does not talk to her yet the fact that she has seen and met him once more in the same room is enough to satisfy her. She discovers that after all these years he still affects her. Anne and Wentworth’s first meeting however winds off on different note. While she anticipates a renewed friendship, he is determined not to even acknowledge their past intimacy to the new acquaintances, the Musgroves. He notices her altered look but refuses to let her power affect him. Such is his determination to disassociate himself from her but not to be for long.

The second encounter takes place at the senior Musgrove’s Great House where Wentworth has now become a regular visitor since he has become a link to their deceased son, Dick Musgrove. Dick was under Wentworth at sea and had mentioned him in his letter to his family. The endearment attached to such connection, in addition to Wentworth’s desire to establish new alliance with the Musgrove ladies, has necessitated his daily visit. As there is no way to avoid
meeting each other, Anne has to bear it well. Like Elinor Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* and Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* she has to be a silent spectator to the courtship of her beloved with the other ladies with a heavy heart. She cannot help seeing him and listening to his ravings about his feats as they hover around him in ecstasy. He flirts and dances with the ladies while Anne provides the music on the piano. Yet for all his resolutions to ignore her, he cannot help inquiring if Anne never dances as she is not seen dancing even once throughout the evening. Such enduring patience and guarded propriety of maintaining a calm composure, even when performing a social duty or seeing her beloved flirting mercilessly in front of her with other ladies cannot go unappreciated. Anne’s sense of connecting with her beloved, despite Wentworth’s deliberate neglect, is noteworthy.

The confidence of an eligible and much-sought-after gentleman cannot help showing off his gallantry, especially to Anne who had rejected him. Wentworth “is a man of action and energy, trenchant convictions, strong and impulsive feelings that often take him to the verge of tactlessness, but little self-questioning or self-doubt” (Wiltshire: 1998: 78). With Anne’s rejection still afresh, Wentworth wants to vindicate his hurt and so behaves recklessly like Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. He trifles with both Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove without knowing which of the sisters he wants to court. He later prefers Louisa for her more resolute mind and principle. Even if there is no verbal exchange between the estranged lovers, Anne invents ways to remain connected to her beloved even when he deliberately tries to avoid her. After dinner, Wentworth takes effort to console Mrs Musgrove for the loss of her late son and comes to sit with them on the sofa where Anne too is seated. “They were actually on the same sofa, for Mrs Musgrove had most readily made room for him – they were divided only by Mrs Musgrove” (51). Anne is satisfied with Wentworth’s silent attention as she knows that he is indirectly trying to punish her for the past.

The next meeting takes place shortly after the initial apprehensions have been quelled. Wentworth in seeking the company of the Musgroves sisters seems to be bidding his time as well as checking on Anne’s reaction towards him. He loses his composure when he chances upon Anne tending the sick nephew at the cottage.
Finding themselves together unexpectedly alone, they both are lost for words. While they are at their wits’ end, Charles Hayter, a cousin and suitor of Henrietta, comes to meet his cousins. He has no cordial feelings towards Wentworth as Henrietta has changed her attitude to him after meeting Wentworth. While the gentlemen wait on the ladies, the younger nephew enters the room and finding nothing to occupy his attention, fastens himself upon Anne's neck. Despite her persistent chidings, the child keeps clinging on to her causing much irritation and embarrassment. Hayter does his best to order the child to come down but to no effect. Wentworth loses no words but goes instantly to relieve the child from Anne’s neck as naturally as an intimate friend. The instant she knows that it is Wentworth who has taken the child off her back, she is agitated.

Her sensation on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not thank him. She could only hang over little Charles, with most disordered feelings. His kindness in stepping forward to her relief – the manner – the silence in which it had passed – the little particulars of the circumstance – with the conviction soon forced on her, by the noise he was studiously making with the child, that he meant to avoid hearing her thanks . . . (61)

Anne cannot comprehend Wentworth’s concern. That he should come to relieve her despite his stoic attitude of indifference is proof enough of his love and concern for her. While Hayter only commands the child on a relatively common concern, Wentworth cannot bear to see the beloved suffering and acts naturally and instantly to release her from the troublesome child. His simple action produces bewilderingly and emotional effects on the agitating mind and not knowing how to react, Anne leaves the room to calm herself.

The fact that Anne and Wentworth are still in love can be ascertained by their reactions to other’s reports about themselves. They start rediscovering themselves through the conversation with their friends during the walk at the hedgerow. Anne overhears Wentworth appreciating a hazel-nut for its strength and durability to Louisa, thereby realising that he still grudges her for her weakness. Wentworth also learns of Anne’s refusal to marry Charles Musgrove from Louisa who innocently states her family’s preference of Anne to Mary. The effect of the
news seems to take action immediately. As soon as Wentworth sees his sister Mrs Croft and the Admiral coming their way, he initiates her to invite Anne to join their gig as they are passing through Uppercross. Just as he has assisted her earlier in relieving the troublesome child, Wentworth assists Anne to the carriage without her asking. She understands him that he still cares for her. “He could not forgive her – but he could not be unfeeling. Though condemning her for the past . . . still he could not see her suffer without the desire of giving her relief. It was the reminder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship” (70). Wentworth’s action brings both pleasure and pain. Pleasure - for he still cares for her for old time sake and - pain – at the thought that she has forfeited his love and would have to eventually lose him in future. The fresh show of kindness brings more pain than his indifference. The sense of anguish is all the more added when the Admiral innocently comments that he would welcome either of the Musgrove sisters whom Wentworth chooses to bring home.

Anne and Wentworth’s love for each other is put to test when the whole party set out to Lyme. Wentworth has recently visited his friend, Captain Harville who has taken residence there. He has spoken so well of the place that an immediate plan to see the place is made and executed. The visit acts as an eye-opener for Wentworth to recognise Anne once more as his former beloved. By now Anne has attained a sense of importance as she has been appreciated, needed and useful at Uppercross. As she is level-headed, taking no sides, they all expect her to amend both sides of the Musgrove families, so unlike her home atmosphere where she is nobody, a nonentity. The appreciation of her personality gives a boost to Anne’s self importance and confidence. Moreover, the effect of new place, new friends, the sea air and the pleasure of an outdoor exercise has made Anne glow with happiness. The change of environment has improved Anne’s health so much so that she has attracted new attentions. Her gentle manner soon wins her the company of bereaved Captain Benwick, who has recently lost his fiancée. He has been engaged to the sister of Captain Harville. She also attracts a handsome passer-by at the beach which alerts Wentworth to take notice of her. To his surprise he discovers that she is indeed attractive “something like Anne Elliot again” (80). It takes a rival to let Wentworth
recognise that Anne is still pretty and worthy to be courted. Later when the stranger is discovered to be Mr Elliot, the cousin and heir to her father’s property, Wentworth expresses his gladness that they are not introduced to him. A sure sign of jealousy of an ardent lover! He is affected and does not know how to conceal it, impulsive as he is by nature.

Wentworth’s tactless courting of Louisa in the belief that he has no more affection for Anne lands him into deep trouble. Mistaking Louisa’s firmness of mind, he does not see that she is a stubborn, spoilt child determined to have her own way, defying even the wishes of her parents and heedless of any advice, once she makes up her mind. Wentworth realises his error the hard way. Louisa loves to be jumped down the steep steps for Wentworth to catch her at the Cobb. The last jump lands her on the hard pathway and she loses consciousness causing unnecessary anxiety for all the party. Wentworth for once loses control of his active mind in time of crisis and seeks help. Anne, whom he has despised for her weak mind, responds rationally. Anne alone is calm among them and sends Benwick to look for a surgeon and suggests that Louisa be taken to the inn. In this entire dilemma, Anne maintains her cool and acts sensibly. Her action does not go unnoticed by Wentworth. She has proved what prudence means contrary to what he thinks of her. He realises that Louisa’s strength of mind is that of a reckless, heedless youngster compared to Anne’s steady command of her mind. Wentworth has earlier seen Anne’s efficiency nursing Little Charles’s broken collar-bone while Mary, the mother pines away in hysterical. And she has done the same now while the rest are in quandary. He starts admiring her cool-headedness and starts re-examining his feelings for her once again.

Caught between duty and personal desire, Wentworth for once is at cross-road. His reckless action requires him to remain in Lyme for sometime as he cannot desert Louisa in such a situation as he feels responsible for her. He realises that he is honour-bound to marry whatever be the outcome of the accident as he has been openly courting her. He cannot address Anne whom he still loves as he is obliged to stick to Louisa. The once competent gallant mellows down to the state where Edward Ferrars in Sense and Sensibility is caught up between his beloved Elinor and
his fiancée Lucy, whom he no longer love. Wentworth therefore runs away as soon as Louisa recovers to settle his mind and resurfaces only after Louisa and Benwick’s marriage is imminent. Unsure of his decision he leaves his fate, for once, to nature to take its own course and sure enough fortune favours his heart’s desire. He has gone into hiding to clear his confusion between Anne and Louisa. Fortunately Louisa has found a gallant-in-waiting in Benwick whose constant care and company during her sickness soon sways her from the memories of a once active and vibrant beau with whom she has been so besotted with before the accident. Benwick too finds relief in nursing a sick damsel and soon gets over the memories of his deceased fiancée. Wentworth is therefore saved by Benwick’s quick recovery from mourning, though not appreciable for so short a period. He owes him a lifetime gratitude for saving him from entering into a loveless marriage by engaging the frail mind of Louisa whom he might have to marry otherwise. Decks being cleared, Wentworth returns to woo back Anne only to find Elliot on the way.

What could have been the happy reunion of two reformed and petrified hearts is delayed by the intervention of Mr Elliot. Anne finds herself accosted by the handsome Elliot at her father’s residence, Camden Place. He has reinstated himself to the company of Kellynch Hall after acquiring enough wealth from his deceased wife. He has now coveted the title and the inheritance which he has earlier detested. His need then has been an immediate source of income to indulge in luxurious lifestyle and so has married a rich woman of inferior status. With her death he has inherited all her fortune and so the title of a baronet would be a feather in his cap. His initial intention in reconciling with the Elliots at Camden Place is to check on Sir Walter so that he does not deprive him of his heritage by marrying Mrs Clay. But after seeing Anne, he wants to associate with the Elliots all the more as he now wants to marry her. With this scheming plan, he is all set to remain at Bath which keeps away other suitors at bay. Like Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, who wants to marry his pretty cousin Jane or Elizabeth as bonus to inheriting their father’s property, Elliot too finds Anne attractive and contemplates on marrying her.

With no future hope to regain Wentworth’s love, Anne fantasises at the idea of becoming Mrs Elliot. “The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of
having the precious name of ‘Lady Elliot’ first revived in herself; of being restored
to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home forever, was a charm which she
could not immediately resist” (123). This however happens to be just a momentary
wish as she cannot dream of marriage with anyone without love. Love is stronger
than the precious home or property to Anne, thus reflecting Jane Austen’s rejection
of Harris Bigg-Wither in real life. “She did not love Harris Bigg-Wither and she
could not marry him” (Rees 1976: 90). Even if marriage could have solved her
precarious situation, her singlehood and dependence on her brother after her father’s
death, Jane Austen could not think of spending her life with someone whom she did
not love. Anne likewise cannot think of marrying Elliot even if Wentworth does not
return to her. Like her creator, she would rather remain single than marry for
convenience sake. Further, after discovering Elliot’s past life and present pursuit
from Mrs Smith, an old friend of Anne, she is immune to his charm.

The Bath scene is set for the reunion of Anne and Wentworth. Both have
rediscovered that they still are committed to each other after all these years.
Wentworth comes back from isolation a reformed person, cleared of all doubts that
Anne and only Anne is the love of his life. Anne also has resolved that no
attachment is greater than her first love and remains true to the memory. They have
heard about Louisa’s engagement to Benwick. Anne is not aware of Wentworth’s
feeling for her and has to find out before it is too late. Anne is therefore more
mentally prepared than Wentworth when they meet next. When Anne first sees him
walking down the street from a shop, while taking shelter from the rain, she is
startled and for a few minutes she loses her mind. She tries to compose herself
despite the agitation and scolds back her senses yet her reaction is quite natural:
“She now felt a great inclination to go to the outer door; she wanted to see if it
rained. Why was she to suspect herself of another motive? Captain Wentworth must
be out of sight. She left her seat, she would go, one half of her should not be always
so much wiser than the other half” (136).

The heart wants to see Wentworth but the mind cautions her action. Caught
between the impulse to see Wentworth and the prudence of holding back, Anne is in
a fix as she is too conscious of being forward in her endeavour, as propriety restricts
a lady from showing emotion before man. While she is thus wavering, Wentworth enters the shop and finds Anne. Wentworth is struck by surprise as he does not anticipate seeing Anne so soon and blushes in embarrassment. He cannot go beyond the normal curtsey. He however returns to resume their conversation without any sign of remorse or regret over Louisa’s impending marriage. But he is no more the confident Wentworth she has known earlier. This is a sign of an unsure suitor, taken aback when suddenly confronted by his beloved. Not sure of her feelings, he is at loss as to how to broach up their friendship. Too much of water have passed under the bridge and so a new approach is needed to tread into the once loving heart of Anne. The old habit of intimacy makes him offer his service to escort her, “by manner, rather than words” (137) when her party heads for the carriage. When she tells him that she is walking home, he offers her the use of his umbrella or to hire a chair but she refuses as she is waiting for Elliot. Such caring thoughts are a hint for Anne to believe that he still cares for her!

From this moment onwards, Anne is all prepared to take initiative to approach Wentworth at any opportuned time. She needs to prove that she is not at all what he thinks of her but still constant in her affection for him. She is sad that her family and friend do not give due recognition to Wentworth as her friend. “Elizabeth had turned from him, Lady Russell overlooked him; her nerves were strengthened by these circumstances; she felt that she owed him attention” (141). In earlier days, she would have been discouraged by such attitudes but now she refuses to be bogged down by their intimidations and so she set forth to create space for him wherever possible. The first occasion of executing her bold action takes place at the concert. She speaks to him first as he enters the hall in the presence of both her father and sister. It encourages him to talk about common friends. As they were in close vicinity, it somehow compels her family to acknowledge Wentworth who is no more the object of “nobody” to be shameful about but a well-off Captain Wentworth. It is rank first for Sir Walter to recognise a person followed by his appearance. He is heard praising Wentworth to his relative. This makes Anne happy as she perceives a sign of approval and can therefore proceed to the next step of inviting him towards her. Jane Austen’s priority to parental approval is here seen for all the children’s
decision in marriage. Wentworth takes the cue and comes to her but to his utter dismay, finds Elliot on the way. He cannot gain access to her as Elliot is a constant companion to their party. Frustrated, he leaves the concert as he has no need to linger on to see Anne being constantly pestered by Elliot. The green horn of jealousy emerges from Wentworth, thus proving his possessiveness of his former beloved. It is therefore left to Anne to manoeuvre the move if she wants his further attention. The old maxim “All is fair in love and war” has to be exercised where the lady, unlike Richardson’s dictum, has to make the first move without which Anne has no way to let Wentworth know of her unchanging affection.

The final reunion of Anne and Wentworth meeting takes place at White Hart, the Musgroves’ residence at Bath. The Musgroves have come for the purchase of wedding trousseaus for Henrietta and Louisa. As Charles and Mary have also come with Captain Harville, Anne visits them and meets Wentworth who too has come to visit his friends. Sir Walter and Elizabeth have invited the whole party to a dinner party, with special attention to Wentworth. In the course of their conversation, Captain Harville confides to Anne his sentiments about the short-lived feeling of Benwick for his dear departed sister Fanny. He laments that “she would not have forgotten him so soon” (182). In discussing the merit of loving longest between the two sexes, Anne takes the opportunity and asserts that “All the privilege I claim for my sex . . . is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone” (184). The heart-wrenching declaration of constancy cannot miss Wentworth’s heart as he is actively listening to their conversation. It gives him a renewed ardour to once again propose to her through the hastily scribbled letter while writing for Harville to Benwick. He leaves the room without a word or a look but returns on the pretext of collecting his gloves only to draw out a letter from among the scattered papers and handed it to her. He has left there for her to find it but not taking chances, Wentworth returns to give it personally. Anne also has moved towards the table where he has been writing, as though expecting to see some traces of his thoughts. They understand each other’s mind and mood without spelling out in words.

Wentworth’s letter contains proposal of marriage which affirms Anne’s notion that he still has strong affection for her in spite of his indifference towards
her. Wentworth has mentioned in the letter that he would be at hand, to decide whether he would be attending her father’s dinner by her response. The response to his hasty proposal is made possible instantly. Receiving an obliging look from Anne, he confidently walks besides them when Charles escorts Anne home thereby giving Charles a chance to requests him to walk her home as he has other work to attend to. “There could not be an objection. There could be only a most proper alacrity, a most obliging compliance for public view; and smiles reined in and spirits dancing in private rapture . . . as they slowly paced the gradual ascent, heedless of every group around them” (189). They are oblivion to everything except recounting their wasted years of separation due to Wentworth’s stubbornness and pride. Nothing in the world can separate them now as social status has qualified “a humble Wentworth to ask for the hand of an Elliot” (Southam 1976: 6). Sir Walter has to accept Wentworth’s social and financial fitness and welcome him as a son-in-law into the family. The marriage of Anne and Wentworth celebrates the jubilation of Jane Austen’s ideal marriage based on mutual love and respect which she avows in all her protagonists.

The marriages of the Musgroves siblings are based more on convenience than on love or esteem for their respective spouses. Charles has married Mary when Anne refuses his proposal. Settling for a second best who accepts him for his looks and property cannot complement his finer senses in the long run. He has to lead a compromised married life with no love lost between them. Brought up liberally and without much parental restraints, he has to manage and adjust himself to suit his destiny. Despite gaining a higher social status with two sons over her unmarried sisters, Mary still is insecure and is ever jealous of them. She has an inferiority complex stemming from her father’s neglect during childhood which eventually leads to her sense of insecurity. She is not happy even in her marriage as she has been the second choice of her husband after Anne. It is most probable that Charles married her on the “rebound” (Fergus 1996: 76). Being less attractive, she is less secure than her sisters and feels competitive with both her sisters and sisters-in-law in everything, even in her husband’s attention to them. She cannot adjust and becomes a misfit with her in-laws and always feel neglected whenever she is not the
centre of attraction. Her only pride and consolation is that she is married to a rich gentleman with “landed estate” and “headship” (196) of a family, a status much envied during the period which is not to be attained by any of her sisters. No marital bliss or personal contentment can be expected from such cold relationship of Mary and Charles Musgrove.

The marriage of the Admiral and Mrs Croft seems to be the perfect example. They are inseparable be at sea or land and share responsibilities in all their endeavours. They are like-minded, amiable, and sociable and can associate with all the people irrespective of rank. Likewise are the Harville couple who manages their married life with the meagre income and who has common accord to welcome and show hospitality to those who are in need even to the extent of sacrificing their children’s welfare when needed. Austen’s inclination towards the navy is seen in Anne’s acceptance of Wentworth.

In *Persuasion* Jane Austen seems to be most vocal about her ideal love marriage. Parental interference and partiality lead to many disappointments both in life and fiction. Mary suffers from inferiority complex that cannot be cured even after her marriage because of her childhood trauma of neglect. Elizabeth cannot find anyone fit to marry her as she regards everyone beneath her standard. Only Anne, with her strong and sincere mind, can conquer her world of neglect and ends well in life through the support of her foster mother and her beloved, Wentworth. Jane Austen through the treatment of human relationships asserts that money and property no doubt are necessary to start a family but parental love and understanding shape the mentality of the children in all their endeavours. She therefore advocates the suitability of minds of the two persons entering into marriage so that they would build up a family based on love, respect and understanding and groom the future generation of the society. For her marriage is very important phase of every man and every woman. And she shows her distinction when the same end is attained through various means, some shallow, others wise. She disapproves of love or marriage that is guided by romantic impulse, nor does she favour love or marriage purely based on money and mercenary interest. The most ideal and pragmatic marriage for her is preceded by understanding of not only emotion but the social posture, individual
worth as decided by the social esteem, that is hard earned, not just given. Her true hero and heroines in the novels really suffer, get tested, for in life nothing is taken for granted. Money and position are just secondary to the treatment of the individual, who will be/is judged by his/her character and action, that involves honesty, sincerity and good heart.

A study of these aspects of life as delineated by Jane Austen in all her novels is of considerable importance as long as love and marriage are vital force to get life of man and women going. She has taken up the immortal question of human relationships built up through the path of love and marriage, which is ceaselessly scrutinised, scanned until a final resolution takes place through the union of true minds.
Works Cited


