

Marxist Feministic Analysis: A Comparative Study of Austen's Pride and prejudice & Kamal's Unmarriageable

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the issues of Marxist feminism in the selected novels "The Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen and "Unmarriageable" by Soniah Kamal. However, the main purpose of the study is to explore the aspects of patriarchal society and limited choice for women in all matters in the context of two different cultures. The other reason for the study is to educate women about their rights and make them independent economically. The Marxist feministic notion of Fredriech Engel's (1884) has been applied as a theoretical framework. The findings show how the female characters struggle for their survival in a society where only men can give them save economic life. The protagonists of both novels decided to live a single life without the support of a rich man and make money for themselves, but we see that both of them end up marrying a rich man in the town. So that shows that women have to go a long way to make themselves financially independent. They cannot live a satisfactory life by earning money themselves still they need the support of a man. Thus the study concludes with a view that societies presented in the novels are extremely patriarchal where women are forced to accept the roles decided for them and live a dependent life. The basic reason for women exploitation begins with the family, where they are always suppressed in making choices in meals, education, and marriage. There is a need to spread awareness among people. People should be educated to erase this discrimination and find a pure classless society, in which women are respected and honoured without facing prejudice by men.

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1. Background of the study

Marxist Feminism is observed as another philosophical notion of feminism that is determined to expand the boundaries of Marxism. Marxist feminism can be defined as a critical framework that aims to stop gender oppression in a structured way (Holmstrom, 2002). Sikka (2013) asserted that Marxist feminism proposes the idea that contemporary means of production have been one of the causes of why women are always considered inferior to men in society and this is the same reason for the survival of capitalism.

Hence, patriarchy is a broad concept that means that the family is ruled by a father and this also refers to the specific type of family in which men are dominated and women are subordinated to them. It clearly shows that men are authoritative in all spheres of life. (Bhasin, 2006)

Throughout the history of the world, most writers with their philosophy of life and utilizing their artistic language have tried to define the nature of human beings on the pages of the different genres of literature, that's why literature has always been considered as the mirror of the society in which it is flourished (Akhtar et al, 2019). Human beings are divided into several classes mainly low class and high class and the members of every class go through several socio-economic and political issues and have grave influences on them. (Bashir and Guzzo, 2019). In the same way, people are also divided in terms of gender. This classification comes as a course of socially constructed phenomena where the roles of the male and female are specified. Gill et al (2018) asserted that from the emergence of the world to the moment, males have always been the supreme creature on the face of the earth and regarded as the breadwinner of the family. Despite all the injustice being done to women, many writers addressed the problems faced by women.

Jane Austen and Soniah Kamal are also considered among those writers who talked about the rights of women and how they are being suppressed due to the so-called norms of society. The former is famous for writing about the world around her and the practice of social classes in society. Her novels presented marriages between different classes and the difficulties that occurred in such unions. Austen was quite aware of the demands of the gentry and reflected them in *The Pride and Prejudice*. She has depicted in her novels only a few characters of her society, through her foolish characters she perfectly dissected her class-based society. The law of inheritance in the eighteenth century was very strict which was the main reason behind Mrs. Bennett's worries, why she wanted all her daughters married to wealthy men.

In chapter fifteen volume three, Lady Catherine's visit to Bennett's house is a vivid example of the class difference between Darcy and Elizabeth. In the same way, when Darcy proposes to her, his proposal is also class-based.

The modern adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* by Kamal also shows class conflict in Pakistani society. The class conflict is presented through the dialogues of different characters. Miss Catherine de Bourgh and Valentine Darsee play the same roles as were played by them in *Pride and Prejudice*. The detailed description of the name of Darsee by Mrs. Binat is an interesting one that shows how people change their names over time once their class is changed.

Kamal's *Unmarriageable* shows how one of Alysba's students' sole aim was to get married, despite the fact many female institutions have been opened but girls are brought up by their families to become good daughters, wives, and mothers.

The author of the novel "Unmarriageable" Soniah Kamal belongs to Pakistan. Her novel is a fine copy of Austen's work which is a depiction of Pakistani society. So, the novel is set in Pakistan which is an Islamic State so; we do not find her characters troubled by the laws of inheritance. But they are being troubled by the characters who are conservative, not mentally enlightened and give much importance to money rather than purity of character.

When we look back to eighteenth-century society, we see most of the women had to live in a typical patriarchal society. In the eighteenth century, there was a constant struggle between the classes. Austen as a Marxist feminist highlighted the restricted nature of life for women who were caught up in the class and wealth boundaries.

If we talk about the discrimination between the classes in Pakistan, we will see that this difference is the root cause of every evil. In Pakistan where society is divided into two extremes, it is very difficult to erase this discrimination.

The research had probed into Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* and *Unmarriageable* by Kamal in order to analyze both these novels from a Marxist feminist point of view. The female characters of the novels reveal how women are suppressed by the patriarchal system of society.

When the exploitation goes beyond its limits the oppressed class starts to raise itself against this exploitation. In Austen's well-known novel, we see Elizabeth Bennett struggling for her emancipation from the strict standards of society.

There is no difference between Austen's Elizabeth and Kamal's Alisba, both stand against the unjust standards for women. Alysba Binat is a strong

woman as she asks to keep the right of divorce to herself. It sounds weird that a woman has the right to divorce in Patriarchal society.

The present study has explored the struggle under the notions of a Marxist feminist perspective. The basic idea in these two novels is the struggle to end discrimination based on class and wealth, and that marriage should be based upon mutual love and affection instead of being merely an economic merger between two parties. Meanwhile, the main objectives of the study were:

1. To pinpoint the key notions of Marxism in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Unmarriageable* by Soniah Kamal.
2. To highlight feministic elements in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Unmarriageable*.
3. To analyze female characters of both novels living in different cultures.
4. To find out the similarities and dissimilarities of two different cultures.

2 Literature Review

A lot of work has been done on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* with the perspective of Marxism and feminism. This literature review includes articles, thesis, and reviews of writers who have discussed different points in "*Pride and Prejudice*" by Austen and "*Unmarriageable*" by Kamal.

Yi (2013) talked about in his article about the female's limited choice of leading life. They do not have vast opportunities to choose a profession or to spend a life of their own choice, if they want to pursue their career had limited choice. They could just be a governess and this profession was also not considered respectful

Baba (2017) discusses the lives of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the study, different themes of the novel have been presented, for example, sisterhood, pride, love, education, women and marriage, wealth, deception, and prejudices. For giving a detailed analysis the researcher has used the descriptive method. His study is different from others because the researcher has highlighted the issues concerning the lives of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Rad (n.d) in his essay depicted the society of the English gentry and their habits and attitude towards life. In this study, he found out that in the nineteenth century how people were judged by their wealth. Class differences can be seen in the novel. The status of women was determined according to the status of their husbands. So the woman had to marry the man who had money.

Brown (2019) in his review has dissected this Pakistani society so that each and every evil and goodness can be seen clearly. The hypocrisies and obsessions are presented as are presented in Austen's work.

Lisa's (2019) review of *Unmarriageable* gives us glimpses of every character in the novel. She has critically viewed female characters in the story, how they feel exasperated by the fixed roles and finally fit themselves into what they want to be.

Kirkus, (2019) found that *Unmarriageable* is a pleasant version of the classical novel *Pride and Prejudice*. It signifies the problems of colonialism, race, and Pakistani identity.

Nattress, L. A. (2019) admires Kamal for presenting Austen's characters in Pakistani society. The Bennetts here become Binats. Though it is hard to match the level of Austen's language Kamal did fantastic work.

After going through all these research papers, thesis, and reviews, I have come to the conclusion that every researcher has opted for either one or two sides of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* the other aspects are yet untouched. One thing has been proved by these researchers that Austen was a feminist beyond doubt and had a spark to do much more for women's rights. So far as this research is concerned, it is different from all these researches in the way that it has discussed the Marxist feminist aspect of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Kamal's *Unmarriageable*. By comparing these two novels written in different societies, we will be able to take a glimpse of the problems faced by middle-class women, which shows the universality of the theme.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Karl Marx was very famous for his philosophies, political economic theories, and socialist views. He is well known for probing the history of class struggle, and he summarized in the initial line of his book named "The Communist Manifesto" (1847) that all the living societies have a record of class politics.

He presented his theory of class conflict because society has been divided into two classes of people,

1. The Bourgeoisie
2. The Proletariat

The bourgeoisie is the owners of the means of production, the factories, and businesses. The proletariat are the exploited workers of the societies. Marx thought that the proletariat is always exploited by the hands of the bourgeoisie.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Friedrich Engel's (1884) notion of Marxism feminism has been applied as a theoretical framework of this study which is discussed below in detail.

2.3.1 Marxist feminism

Marxist feminism is a form of Feminism that investigates and explains the ways in which women are oppressed through economic systems of society and private property. Engels (1884) argues that besides these proletariats and bourgeoisie, there is another class that is struggling to achieve their rights. This struggle is between men and women. Men like the bourgeoisie have authority in all fields of life, they earn money and make decisions and it was a tradition that property should be inherited only by the male member of the house.

The complete perspective of the theory is that the main reason for the down position of women starts from home. The idea of keeping personal property brought a fundamental change in the family structures of society. The supporters of the theory believed that by putting an end to this law of private property the dominant system of one class would be abolished and this seemed to be the only way by which the status of women can be elevated.

Marxist Feminism investigates the different ways of women oppression. They finally found out that family systems are defective and law of property and economic systems should be changed if we want a better life for women. Friedrich Engels in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, said that in the past people used to live together, they work together. They did not face any kind of discrimination, there was no concept of private property. All were treated equally. Engels concluded from this that male dominance that is different in many ways is not the product of biological distinction but socially made.

Working women's problems are highlighted by Marxist feminists. Their main focus is to make people understand that taking care of children and domestic work is of high value. Socialism creates distances between people and it is also responsible for unhealthy relationships among men and women.

2. METHODOLOGY

The nature of the study is qualitative. The Marxist approach of Karl Marx (1847) has been applied as a conceptual framework while the Marxist Feministic notion of Friedrich Engels (1884) has been taken as a theoretical framework of this study. Two novels namely "*Pride and Prejudice*" by Jane Austen and "*Unmarriageable*" by Soniah Kamal have been the source of data and a particular sample of ten paragraphs five from each have been selected as a sample through purposive sampling technique. While textual method has been used by the researcher to analyse the data.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Text Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* by Austen

Text 1:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." (Austen, 1813, p. 1)

Context:

It is the first opening line of the novel which declares what it is all about. We find in it a great verbal irony because further reading of the novel illustrates that it is not men but women who are in search of a man with a large fortune.

Discussion

The very first line throws light on the economic conditions of both males and females in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where the females were usually economically dependent on the male member of the family. It also highlights how the marriage proposals were accepted and rejected on the basis of social status. Being denied to own private property, females were always in need of a man who would support them financially. This line proves to be true in the case of Jane and Charlotte Lucas's marriages but Elizabeth Bennett rejected the truth that was universally acknowledged and married the man she loved. This also describes the theme of the novel which is based on love and marriage.

Text 2:

" Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"(Austen, 1813, p. 1).

Context:

The news of the arrival of a new bachelor in Netherfield made Mrs. Bennett rejoiced. She is overjoyed to hear that he is not just single but has a large fortune. She wishes that one of her daughters may marry him.

Discussion:

Mrs. Bennett is always looking for wealthy bachelors for her daughters. The law of entailment scares her, if Mr. Bennett dies their state shall go to Mr. Collins, and as a result, all the Bennetts will be left penniless. She does not want to see her daughters poor. When she hears the news that a bachelor arrives in their neighborhood, she raptures with the thought that he may marry one of her daughters. For her money makes a man perfect, she is unable to see other personality traits in her son-in-law to be.

Text 3:

The death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this. Howsoever that may be, you are grievously to be plied.....They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others for who, as Lady Catherine herself

condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family. (Austen, 1813, p. 285)

Context:

The society which was so class-conscious and patriarchal, one person's wrong action affects the whole family, when Lydia runs off, she actually casts shame on her sisters.

Discussion:

Here we get another example of society's norms and values. When Lydia elopes with Wickham she eliminates the prospects of marriage of her other sisters. Elopement was equal to sin and the whole family faced humiliation at the hands of people. Mr. Collins in his letter used harsh and hurting remarks in his letter referring to Lydia's elopement. Mr. Bennett accepts his fault for not controlling her, this always happens when children do something wrong parents are to be blamed. In these lines, Mr. Collins is also thankful for being rejected by Elizabeth.

Text 4:

"In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal." (Austen, 1813, p. 344)

Context:

In these lines, we find an example of Marxist feminism. That was a time when women wanted freedom and equality. This spark we find in Elizabeth, when Darcy's aunt warns her not to marry him, Elizabeth does not consider herself inferior to him in any way.

Discussion:

When Lady Catherine makes a sudden visit to Bennett's house and warns Elizabeth to stay away from her nephew Darcy, Elizabeth reacts by saying that she and Darcy are equal as he is a gentleman and she is a gentleman's daughter. She doesn't believe the class division in the society. She values her character, education, and manners which rank her at the highest position in society. This speech shows how women of the middle class get humiliated at the hands of social elites.

Text 5:

"His pride, said Miss Locus, does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it." (Austen, 1813, p.376)

Context:

When the ball ends, all the girls start discussing it. Miss Charlotte speaks in favour of Mr. Darcy's attitude.

Discussion:

Everyone dislikes Darcy's rude and arrogant attitude, but the only person who speaks in favour of him is Miss Charlotte. She says if a person has so many blessings in his life, then nothing can stop him from becoming proud. She belongs to a middle class family thus knows the value of money and so she doesn't find any fault in his personality as she thinks that rich men have every right to become proud.

4.2 Text Analysis of Unmarriageable by Kamal

Text 1:

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a girl can go from pauper to princess or princess to pauper in the mere seconds it takes for her to accept a proposal."(Kamal, 2019, p. 11).

Context:

It is the very first line of the modern retelling of Pride and Prejudice set in Pakistan, which gives a glimpse of Pakistani society. Alysba Binat is a teacher at the British School of Dillipabad where she teaches English literature; she is also a big fan of Jane Austen. She writes on the board a popular sentence of Pride and Prejudice and invites her students to make another one like this.

Discussion:

It clearly depicts the position of women in Pakistani society, where all her decisions relating to her life are taken by male members of her family. Though the laws of owning property for females were not as strict as in the 19th century, because in Islam third of the share of property is given to daughters in inheritance, still majority of the families are reluctant to give any share to them just to make them economically weak. So, the only way left for women to become rich is to marry a wealthy man.

Text 2:

"I think every woman should have her own income, Alys said to Kaleen, 'even married women.'"(Kamal, 2019, p. 254)

Context:

Alys asks Sherry to sell her recitation recordings to earn some money because women must be financially strong. Kaleen is against women who should work and earn money because professional women can never be good in running homes.

Discussion:

The main reason for poverty in Pakistani society is that they never allow their women to come forward and have their share to support the family. Even educated men do not want their wives to work and be financially strong. But now women are trying to change this concept. They struggle to break the shackles of these stereotypes. Exploring these lines through

Marxist feminism, it is evident that women can get an appropriate place in society if they are economically independent.

Text 3:

"I don't know what gave you the impression that I would marry you. I would never marry you under any circumstances. You are unmarriageable."(Kamal, 2019, p. 271).

Context:

Darsee proposes to Alysba but she is reluctant to accept this offer since she thinks him unworthy to be her husband.

Discussion:

In a society that measures a woman's worth according to her marital status and further, according to the financial status of her husband, it seems quite incredible that a girl rejects a marriage offer from a handsome, rich man just because he is proud of his possessions. Alysba is a woman of different thinking, for her marriage is not the sole destination of her life; she has to do much more for herself and her family. She cannot marry a man who is disrespectful to her family. She just expects respect and love from her husband.

Text 4:

"Hillima said, 'We have educated girls who can earn.'" "This is true, 'Jena said, 'we will never stare.'" (Kamal, 2019, p. 331)

Context:

In the evening Mrs. Binat is mourning over her ill luck, and her maid consoles her that she should not be worried about what has been lost, and be thankful for whatever she has.

Discussion:

Exploring it through Marxist feminism we see that now in the 21st century, women are experiencing different kinds of attitudes from people. They have become liberal to send their daughters to school, college, and even to universities. Jena says now they have enough money that they will never starve and will always live in a better way without looking for anyone's help.

Text 5:

"..... the sisters insisted on the right of divorce being added to their marriage certificates, despite Mrs. Binat's protest that such a caveat was an ill omen." (Kamal, 2019, p. 357)

Context:

In the following chapter, the wedding ceremony of both sisters is going to happen. The brides want everything according to their choice on the wedding day. The grooms decide to pay the bills and the girl's family

agrees because it is going to be their money once they get married. Both sisters also demand their right to divorce.

Discussion:

The lines show the sisters were fully aware of their rights, and it is their religious and legal right as well. The brides are educated so, they know their limitations as well as their liberties. But despite the freedom their religion and law give them, society does not accept their liberties and wants to see women confined to the four walls of the house. People think that women who insist on having the right to divorce cannot be good homemakers. So Mrs. Binat who is under great influence of the patriarchal society is very much disturbed by the demand from her daughters.

5. Findings and Discussion

Both writers Jane Austen and Soniah Kamal give a real picture of their societies to portray the miseries of women. Class discrimination is also emphasized in these two novels through the characters of Lady Catherine and Beenadeybagh, both the ladies are the product of the upper class who enjoy insulting people who are below their status.

Women's sufferings remain the same despite the advancement in every walk of life. There needs to be a lot of improvement in women's rights. Their troubles are universal. Male-dominant societies never want women to excel in any field. They never allow women to come equal to their status. So they want them to stay dependent on them financially, to have full control of them.

Keeping in view both these novels *The Pride and Prejudice* and *Unmarriageable* the following findings can be made.

Love

The novel tells the love stories of different characters who are all united by the bond of love and marriage. Though initially there are some obstacles and hindrances between their love finally they are successful in overcoming these problems so, we see love wins over everything. This happens to be true in the case of Jane and Bingley and Elizabeth and Darcy.

Pride

Pride is the recurrent theme of *Pride and Prejudice*. It is one of the most fundamental barriers in the union of Elizabeth and Darcy. Darcy is very proud and arrogant of his social position in society. Darcy's pride directs him to hate all those belonging to lower positions.

Prejudice

Elizabeth is quick to judge other people and immediately gets prejudiced against them. She mistook both Darcy and Wickham in the beginning but soon realized that her judgment about them was wrong.

Gender

Gender is one of the primary themes of *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel was written at a time when gender roles were very strict. No one was allowed to perform outside of their fixed roles. Females were forced to get married just to keep their future secure. As far as upper-class women were concerned they would not have been able to earn a living or live independently.

Integrity

Elizabeth has high standards of morality. She always gets disappointed by the ways people behave. She was not contented with the world around her. Elizabeth sticks to her views of integrity when Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy propose to her, but she does not come under the false pressures of society; she remains true to herself and her moral integrity.

Power

The theme of power runs throughout the novel. Every character is talking about their social position and is conscious of his or her financial condition. This is true for every capitalist society, and this is the power that makes them cruel. Lady Catherine is shown as a powerful character who has a great influence on Mr. Collins's life.

Family

The most important theme of the novel is family. Family plays an important role in shaping the future of most of the characters in the novel. Miss Sherry Loclus was successful in getting married and became a good housewife because her mother always told her how to be a good wife. Whereas Mrs. Binat's foolish way of upbringing made her daughters headstrong and stubborn. Alysba decided that she would never get married. She did not like her parents' relationship and thought that when men and women are united in the bond of marriage and become husband and wife, they do not respect each other.

Women

Another theme in the novel we find is women. Soniah herself is a Pakistani woman so she can very well reveal the problems faced by women in Pakistan. It shows that just like in *Pride and Prejudice*, women were expected to be as subservient to the male members of the family. Sherry Loclus gets married just to avoid being called poor by society.

Class

Class is the most prevalent theme in Kamal's novel she lived in Pakistan and has observed so closely the society which is divided into different classes. People are materialistic and give respect only to those who are rich. The Binat family has fallen from a high position to a lower position. So, Mrs. Binat is obsessed with changing her daughter's social status.

Individual vs. Society

In this modern retelling, characters are answerable to society about their responsibilities to the world. Society significantly probes into the lives of people. When Lady elopes everyone feels their utmost responsibility to comment on the incident. Moreover, if we talk about Alysba, she is fighting against all odds of society alone. However, in her fight, she wins and finally sets an example for her other sisters.

After analyzing these novels we come to realize that economic status does highly affect relationships among men and women. Elizabeth and Darcy in *The Pride and Prejudice* and Alysba and Darsee in *Unmarriageable* face a lot of obstacles in marriage.

5.1 Recommendations

1. The future researchers can explore the psychological aspects of the novels under this investigation.
2. They can go for only the Marxist analysis of these novels.
3. They can reinvestigate the findings of this same study.

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