

# **A WOMAN NOW AND BEFORE**

## **ZENA NEKAD I SAD**

### **Autor:**

**Jovcic Katarina**, učenica IV razreda Gimnazije "Stevan Jakovljevic", Vlasotince

### **Mentor:**

**Biljana Pipovic**, profesor engleskog jezika

### **REZIME**

U svetu gde zive dva razlicita pola, zavisna jedan od drugog, suprotstavljena, a ipak slozna, jedan od njih se mora pokazati kao superiorniji. To bi bio onaj koji je jaci, mocniji, okrutniji, neustrasiv... U nasem svetu to bi bili muskarci. A njihovi podređeni? To su zene.

Do danas one su uspele da se manje-vise izjednace sa superiornijim muskarcima. Njihov napredak vidi se kroz prava koja su ostvarile. Pocevsi od drustvenih do intimnih odnosa, njihova uloga se menja, a koliko su zene bile podredjene kao supruge i clanovi drustva i porodice najbolje se vidi u poredjenju proslosti i sadasnjosti. Nedostaci prethodnog rezima kojim su zene bile ugnjetavane (obespravljene) pokazuju njihovu slabost, dok prednosti danasnjeg modernog drustva isticu koliko su zene sposobne.

Zene su dostigle sam vrh na drustvenoj lestvici... ali mogu one i dalje od toga.

Kljucne reci: zene, proslost, sadasnjest, ljubav, brak, odnosi, drustvo, uloge, prava

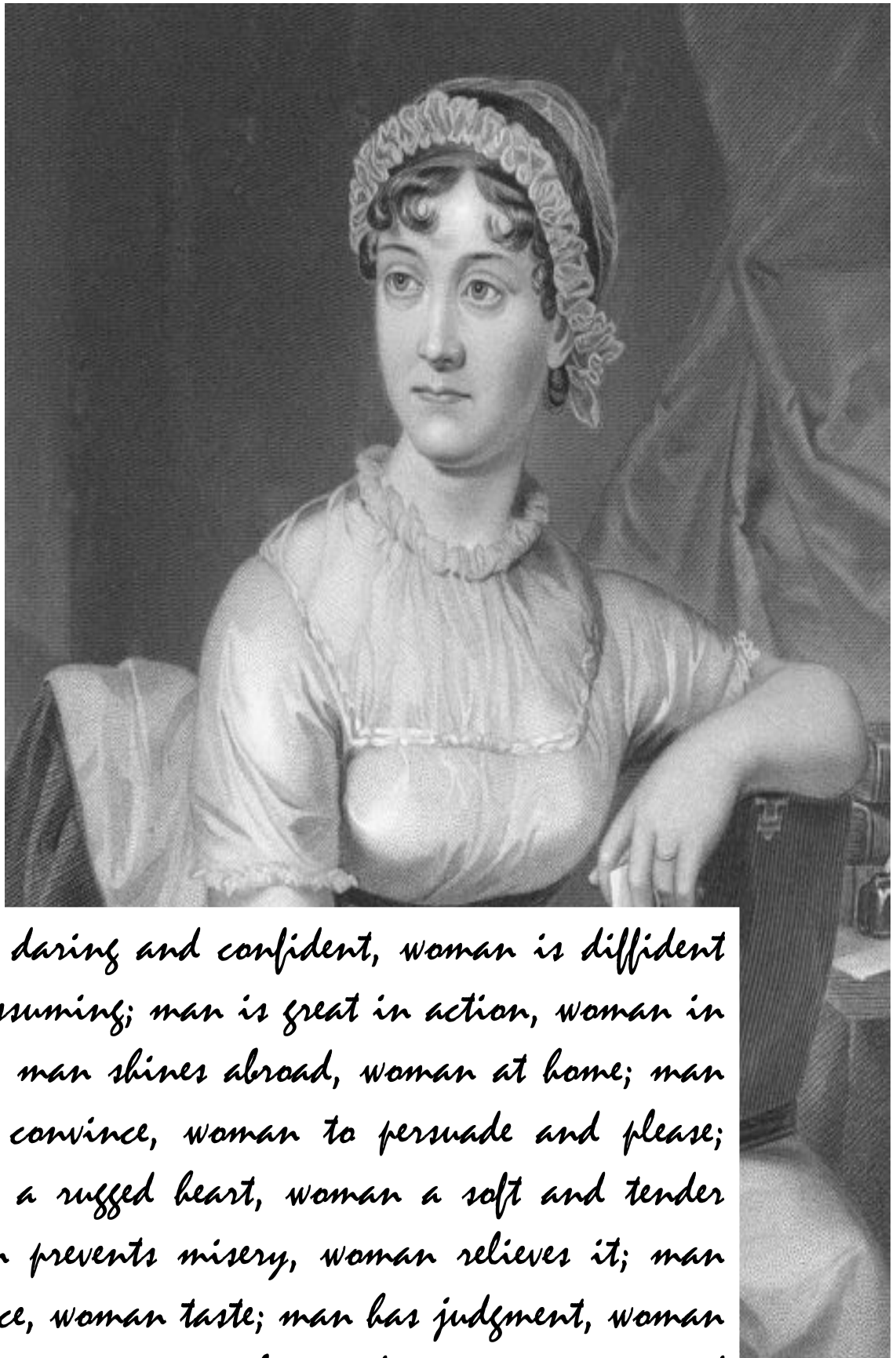
### **SUMMARY**

In the world where two different sexes live, dependent on each other and contradictory and harmonious at the same time, one of them must come out as superior. That would be the one that is stronger, more powerful, crueller, fearless... In our world its name is – MEN. And their subordinates? That's WOMEN.

Up to now women have managed to become more or less equal to superior men. We can see their progress through the rights they have gained. Starting with social to intimate relations, women's roles are changing. How women were subordinated as wives and members of society and family is best seen comparing past and present. Disadvantages of the previous regime by which women were tyrannized show their weakness, while the advantages of the modern social system point out how much women are capable.

Women have reached the top of the social ladder... but they can go further.

**Key words:** women, past, present, love, marriage, family, relations, society roles, rights



*"Man is daring and confident, woman is diffident and unassuming; man is great in action, woman in suffering; man shines abroad, woman at home; man talks to convince, woman to persuade and please; man has a rugged heart, woman a soft and tender one; man prevents misery, woman relieves it; man has science, woman taste; man has judgment, woman sensibility; man is a being of justice, woman of mercy."*

# Introduction

A woman is the greatest creator on Earth. Mankind depends on her, because she's the one that brings life. If we begin wondering how they've been treated, up to now, since their nature makes them interesting and important, we may find the answer looking through the eyes of a woman who already dealt with it.

Jane Austen, one of the premier authors of her time, made absolutely no reference in her novels to the historical events of the literary movement taking place in the world around her. Instead, she wrote about what she knew: women and the condition in which they lived. Due to the narrow scope of her works, Austen was able to show the standard of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century society, standards which "impose some order and control on a situation that in fact gave scope for great suffering and disastrous marriages, a situation in which women had no status except as a daughter and a wife, and where, if she were deprived of her belief that marriage was both a worthy ambition and her salvation, she would be deprived of life. Although deeply rooted in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Austen's books, especially *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, hold universal truths still applicable to people today, showing people stuck in a situation and coping with it the best way they can. Both books dealt with the standards of the times and the issues concerning women, including the pressures of society to marry, female dependency on men, and lack of individualism.

## Love, Marriage and Family

There is only one cause of beginning and keeping the most harmonious and the best relations among people which at the same time represents source of life and goodness. It is love.

These days love is free. It makes the major part of what is the best in our souls; people glorify it, write and sing about it. However, the most important thing is that love is openly shown anywhere it appears. Everybody expresses it in their own way no matter who or what the object of their affection is. Nowadays love is an expression of free will.

But has it always been like that? World develops continuously through the revolutions and as a result of a great man's mind, and love as a part of it, makes its progress too.

The feeling of affection has always been the same, but the way of its showing up has changed, and degree of man's free will to govern as well, exerting influence on many things.

When we look back in the past we cannot say that love was the most important. What has maintained human being, after all, is the wish for existence and the power of adaptation. Related to this, money had the main role which used to provide easier survival, power, fame, and rank even at the price of love which was mostly neglected and subjected to the interest of an individual or the whole society of the time. Of course that money has the same importance these days, but now people give and receive love without fear and they have learnt to appreciate it more.

The consequence of love is marriage. Marriage as a community of a man and a woman can be based upon interest or love. That is well known. However, the important fact is that in the past marriage was used as a way of reaching a good rank or simply providing necessities of life. Today a person can also get a new status by getting married, but it is not expressed to such an extent as it used to be, when emotions were put aside and the benefit of marriage was in the first place.

Speaking of emotions... Women have the main role in it. They are gentle, sensitive and feeble ones, who easily submit, unlike men. So, what can we say about women's position now and before?

We can't help but notice a great difference and how it was hard for a woman to cope with the world where men ruled.

A woman now is a great leader in family, the embodiment of tenderness. Actually, she has always been like that, but through time she had to subject her nature to the rules dictated by society.

Today most people have "a happy life" as a goal in life, and in the past it was "a good life". It was impossible to imagine poor life with love but rich one without it. And women had to live without many rights.

Family is something that comes out of marriage and it is the most important thing to every person. What kind of a person we will become depends partly on how we are brought up. Therefore we cannot observe a woman now and before without focusing on the structure of a family, relations within it, and the role of a parent.

It is clear that democracy rules nowadays and that women had almost no rights before, and decisions were made for them by their parents who didn't endeavor to take into consideration their wishes but to have them good settled.

### *Love*

The end of the nineteenth century was the time of tumult and change, and tensions showed in the lives of women. Attaining the proscribed female role of wife, mother and moral safeguard of home and family was more than many women could bear, and their physical and mental health suffered. New opportunities in education, employment and social protest caused many women to question the role society cast for them. Involvement in any of these activities often led to unanticipated results and actions that defined new roles for women in the decades that followed.

Nowadays, times have changed...

First off all, it is important to point out the main characteristics of a woman before. She naturally possessed virtues of faith, simplicity, goodness, self-sacrifice, tenderness, affection, sentimentality, and modesty. Purity was an essential characteristic, therefore women were expected to be smart in love, to have a man for a life time, and to show no wantonness because "the purity of women is the everlasting barrier against which the tides of man's sensual nature surge". Another characteristic was submissiveness which required women to accept their positions in life willingly and obediently, thereby affirming God had appointed them to that special position. To suffer and to be silent under suffering seems the great command women had to obey.

"A Perfect woman" was a loving wife, a caring mother, a responsible housekeeper, a "true" woman was that female at home in whom the heart of her husband rejoiced and whose price was above rubies.

A great distinction of a woman was reserve. Intelligence and upbringing was valued through wisdom in their conduct which required prudence and forbearance and above all eloquence. Women were often obliged to react in an appropriate way regardless of their true emotions due to mere politeness. They were judged for infatuation; therefore women had to possess strength of understanding and coolness of judgment. In Jane Austin's book *Sense and Sensibility* it is said: "She knew how to govern feelings-it was knowledge which everyone should learn". We can see it in a description of a condition of one of her heroines: "Elizabeth had never been more at a loss to make her feelings appear what they were not. It was necessary to laugh when she would rather have cried."

A discretion of conduct and self-command were real merits, and attachment was less openly shown ("They were talking with composure of voice under which could be concealed an emotion and

distress“). Women’s nature wasn’t appreciated. They were considered as the ones that can’t have clear judgment and use mind to estimate what is good for them. With passionate heart, as it has always been at women’s, it is hard to think and judge clearly; people always knew that and members of a family used to control their daughters’ feelings teaching them to be good coquettes, to flirt until they make men propose to them, because having a relationship was senseless. What was important was to be with the man who would provide you a good life no matter if he wasn’t chosen by your heart. To modern women this would sound terrible, but a woman before wasn’t supposed to deal with great emotions for long and as soon as she saw a convenient man for her she would fancy him her husband. In *Sense and Sensibility* Darcy says: “A lady’s imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony in a moment. “

Mostly women were supposed to make themselves agreeable and to point out “smartness of air“. Anyway, it is clear that love and state of being in love were reduced to a short-lived and superficial seduction which aim was only to end up married.

Having many rights, among which free choice is the most important in this case. Women at present mostly wish for independence, their own job and freedom to improve themselves; and when it comes to love there are long relationships with intimacy which is shown everywhere, and the joy of sharing common life without getting married. Furthermore, women no longer suffer the pressure society caused and they are free to satisfy their necessity to love and be loved, for today women can financially rely on themselves, though there are still the ones who would rather have some benefit from marriage than to care for love. All in all, it is important that women nowadays can choose their partners freely; they don’t have to depend upon men for they are finally considered as capable beings for more than just having children and maintaining mankind.

A woman was expected to find her strength and meaning of self in her submissive state and in her dedication to home and family. However, as a result of modernization, industrialization, and the accompanying changes in society, women became increasingly, though gradually, more independent, they asserted themselves in the expanding industrial sector; they were drawn into social, political, religious, and literary activities, speaking out on relevant issues of the day. Consequently, women became a more visible segment of society, no longer considered merely as an adornment for males or solely relegated to kitchens and parlors of their homes. While it would be decades before women's "liberation" and suffrage were attained, women were rallying the forces in defense of their search for freedom and self-identity, winning the support of sensitive contemporaries.

## ***Marriage***

Marriage rests on a condition of a loving and cheerful submission on the part of the wife. When you became a wife, he became your head, and your supposed superiority was buried in that voluntary act.

The marriage of a man and woman was not always a happy experience but occasionally an act of necessity. It was a relatively simple affair. As a rule there was no much ado in the way of engagement. A man obtained the woman’s parents' permission to wed her without her input and occasionally, when true love was involved, a woman would fashion a customary ring from a lock of her hair and present it to her finance as a tentative token of commitment.

Marriage, then, was a social placement; an elevation or in some cases perhaps, a demotion in social status for men as well as women. It was possible for a man or a woman to “marry up“or “marry down“on the social ladder.

Like all other human institutions, marriage is not permanent and alterable in form, but necessarily changes shape with the changes of social development. The forms of marriage are

transitional, like the societies in which they exist. Each age keeps getting ahead of the law, yet there are always some laggards of whom the law for the time being is ahead? At present the strict letter of the law denies to a married woman the freedom of action which more and more women are coming to regard not only as their right but also as their dearest treasure; and this naturally causes certain unwillingness on the part of the thoughtful women to marry.

Women were treated as inferior, subjected to double standards, and equated with black slaves, even though wives were usually treated with outward respect and deference. Marriages doomed women to insipid and meaningless lives, devoted to gossip, clothing, and often to no greater ambition than merely getting through the day, thus, women were simply appendages to the daily activities of men.

Women were expected to comfort and cheer, to nurse and support, to manage and oversee. Housework was to be viewed as a morally uplifting mental and physical exercise. Marriage was the proper sphere for women where she could fulfill her divinely ordained mission. Wife - the counselor and friend of the husband; who makes it her daily study to lighten his cares, to soothe his sorrows, and augment his joys; who, like a guardian angel, watches over his interests, warns him against dangers, comforts him under trials; and by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavors to render him more virtuous, more useful, more honorable, and more happy.

There are also reasons why marriage was not a state to be entered into lightly. Marriage was almost always for life. In 19th Century England marriage was viewed in large part as a woman's understood destiny and a man's social prerogative. By taking a wife, a man essentially laid claim to her and to all her assets. Her dowry and everything the woman possessed at the time of the marriage or earned thereafter belonged to her husband as a matter of common law. As his wife, the woman also became subordinate to her husband in the same way a child or servant would be. Women were careful not to oppose their husbands since it was much easier for a man to divorce his wife than it was for a wife to divorce her husband.

The laws in Britain were based on the idea that women would get married and that their husbands would take care of them. Before the passing of the 1882 Married Property Act, when a woman got married her wealth was passed to her husband. If a woman worked after marriage, her earnings also belonged to her husband. The idea was that upper and middle class women had to stay dependent on a man: first as a daughter and later as a wife. Once married, it was extremely difficult for a woman to obtain a divorce. Simplifying a bit, almost the only grounds for divorce was the sexual infidelity of the wife, but wives were not able to obtain a divorce if they discovered that their husbands had been unfaithful. There was also the possibility of legal separations on grounds of cruelty, etc. (where neither spouse had the right to remarry), but the husband generally had absolute custody rights over any children, and could prevent the wife from seeing them at his whim. Of course, any property that a woman possessed before her marriage automatically becomes her husband's, unless it is "settled" on her; this leads to the "fortune-hunter" phenomenon: men who marry a woman only for the sake of the woman's fortune, after the marriage, the woman and her money are legally in the husband's power.

Jane Austen examined the financial pressures on women to marry. In the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, she wrote, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of good fortune, must be in want of a wife". Actually, Austen, a systematic ironic, meant that a single woman, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was in want of a man with a good fortune. In Austen's little world, marriage "was the only honourable provision for a well-educated young woman of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their

pleasantest preservative from want". The only viable alternative to marriage was to become a governess, commonly referred to as the "governess slave-trade" since "minimum wage and hour limitation for workers did not exist at the time". Even those who became governesses were not guaranteed stability since unemployment among them was common. It was for this reason - to avoid being a governess - that many of Austen's female characters married. For example, Charlotte Lucas in *Pride and Prejudice* was a twenty-seven year old woman, unmarried, poor, and plain. Therefore, when Mr. Collins, a man she neither loved nor respected, proposed to her, Charlotte accepted, saying that "considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state". "Miss Lucas accepted him solely from the pure and disinterested desire of establishment... Without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony marriage had always been her object. Charlotte and Willoughby, a character in *Sense and Sensibility*, were the spokesmen for the crass materialism in their society. Like Charlotte, Willoughby married for purely economic reasons. Willoughby was in love with Marianne Dashwood as his actions showed - he offered her one of his horses, he accepted from her a lock of hair, and he called her by her Christian name. To Elinor, Marianne's sister, these actions bespoke "an intimacy so decided, a meaning so direct, as marked a perfect agreement between them". But, despite his love for Marianne, Willoughby married Miss Grey, a woman of great fortune. Willoughby's reasoning was simple - "Miss Grey had fifty thousand pounds. Marianne was virtually penniless". Mr. Wickham says: „Our habits of expense make us too dependent, and where are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some affection to money“. Had he married Marianne, "he would have had a wife he loved, but no money - and might soon have learned to rank the demands of his pocket-book far above the demands of his heart". Willoughby's choice to marry for money instead of love highlighted the plight of poor women during this time by showing how difficult it was for them to find husbands, their only refuge from being penniless old maids or governesses.

In addition to financial pressures, the severe restrictions laws and customs of eighteenth and nineteenth century England placed on women made women look to marriage as means of stability and made women even more dependent on men. For instance, inheritance laws entailed a family's inheritance to a male heir. In the situation of the Bennet family in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennet's inheritance, his money and his home, Longbourn House, would have gone to Mr. Collins, his cousin, leaving his wife and five daughters poor and homeless upon his death. As for the Dashwoods in *Sense and Sensibility* Mr. Dashwood's estate of Norland was left to him in such a way as prevented him from dividing it between his families. Norland in its entirety was therefore John Dashwood, his son's by law, but John's stepmother and stepsisters were left with only five hundred pounds a year, barely enough to live on and nothing for the girls' dowries. From *Sense and Sensibility*, where a male heir deprived his sisters of their home to *Pride and Prejudice*, where the male entail threatens the Bennet girls with marriages of convenience, Austen showed that patriarchal control of women depended on women being denied the right to earn or even inherit their own money.

Since women were deprived of the liberty to earn or inherit money, marriage was their safety net from a life of poverty and despair; thus, women felt that their only alternative was to compete on the marriage market. Men were the buyers; women were the sellers. Society encouraged young women "to exercise gamesmanship instead of honesty, to control rather than to share, and to live through others rather than to find their own fulfillment". For these reasons, good marriages were extremely uncommon. However, a fundamental idea in Austen's novels was that a respectable marriage was an equal marriage in which man and woman were partners, and was therefore based on friendship, love, and esteem. As Mrs. Dashwood says: "I have never known what is to separate esteem and love." In Austen's opinion, a person should "do any thing rather than marry without affection". The paradigm of these ideas was the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy in *Pride and*

*Prejudice*. When Darcy insulted Elizabeth Bennet by telling her that he loved her despite "his sense of her inferiority," Elizabeth firmly told him that, even though he was rich and powerful, she "had not known him a month before she felt he was the last man in the world whom [she] could ever be prevailed to marry". Only after Darcy realized that he and Elizabeth were equals - equally intelligent, equally articulate, and equally proud and prejudiced - did Elizabeth give up her prejudice against him. Through her portrait of Elizabeth and Darcy, Austen made the reader believe in the possibility of love and identity, the chance for true love, because she showed it happening in the very midst of the forces that had traditionally worked against it.

In contrast to the relationship of Darcy and Elizabeth, the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Mr. and Mrs. Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility* showed the consequences of disregarding the essential components, according to Jane Austen, of a happy marriage: equality, respect, and love. Mrs. Bennet, "a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper," was not Mr. Bennet's intellectual equal; instead, she was merely a pretty face. Likewise, Mr. Palmer was captivated by an airhead with a pretty face and, unfortunately, he "cannot give her back". As a result of their unequal and unfulfilling marriages, Mr. Bennet spent his life making fun of Mrs. Bennet and "belittling his responsibilities to her, to his children, and to his society," while Mr. Palmer was invariably rude to his wife and almost everyone around him.

Regardless of a woman's ultimate decision to marry or to remain single, Austen did not present an innocent heroine imprisoned in a marriage for which she was not responsible. Although their options were limited and unpromising, Austen's women were not forced to marry. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Lucas chose to marry Mr. Collins "with her eyes open". Miss Marianne says: "A woman of 27 could never cope to feel or inspire affection again. It would seem only a commercial exchange in which wants to benefit at the expense of the other.

Next, middle class women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not encouraged to think of themselves as "members of the nation of individuals". Social decorum taught women "to practice propriety instead of displaying their intelligence, to practice self-denial instead of cultivating self-assertion, and to think of themselves collectively, in terms of universals of the sex, instead of contemplating individual autonomy, talents, and capacities or rights". In *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne referred to this idea when she remarked, "I suppose I have erred against decorum. I should have been dull and spiritless and talked only of the weather..."

What would happen if women remained unmarried?

Unmarried women also had to live with their families, or with family-approved protectors, it is almost unheard of, for a genteel youngish and never-married female, to live by herself, even if she happened to be a heiress (Lady Catherine: "Young women should always be properly guarded and attended, according to their situation in life"). Only in the relatively uncommon case of an orphan heiress who has already inherited (i.e. who has "come of age" and whose father and mother are both dead), can a young never-married female set herself up as the head of a household (and even here she must hire a respectable older lady to be a "companion").

When a young woman leaves her family without their approval (or leaves the relatives or family-approved friends or school where she has been staying), this is always very serious, a symptom of a radical break, such as running away to marry a disapproved husband, or entering into an illicit relationship (as when Lydia leaves the Foresters to run away with Wickham).

Therefore, a woman who did not marry could generally only look forward to living with her relatives as a dependant, so that marriage is pretty much the only way of ever getting out from under the parental roof, unless, of course, her family could not support her, in which case she could face the unpleasant necessity of going to live with employers as a dependant governess or teacher, or hired "lady's companion". A woman with no relations or employer was in danger of slipping off the scale of



gentility altogether. And in general, becoming an "old maid" was not considered a desirable fate (so when Charlotte Lucas, at age 27, marries Mr. Collins, her brothers are "relieved from their apprehension of Charlotte's dying an old maid", and Lydia says "Jane will be quite an old maid soon, I declare. She is almost three and twenty!").

Given all this, some women were willing to marry just because marriage was the only allowed route to financial security, or to escape an uncongenial family situation.

In conclusion, Jane Austen took a "stratified society absolutely for granted and examined the female powerlessness that underlined monetary pressure to marry," the injustice of eighteenth and nineteenth century laws and customs, and the suppressed individualism of females. Through her novels, Austen gave a voice to the women of her time, and, in doing so, gave a voice for the society in which she lived. But, Austen's own voice was not lost among the others; she spoke loud and clear in the outcome of her stories because, despite the existing female condition, the heroines in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* overcame society's barriers by marrying for love instead of money or future well-being, by expressing their true selves, and by asserting the small amount of freedom that they were allowed, all of which society considered to be appropriate behavior, all of which Jane Austen considered to be essential to a happy and fulfilling life, and all of which are relevant to women even today.

## ***Family***

Family life was an important institution. A man's time was invested in business and delegation of household activities and work while the woman's place was inside the home as delegated member of the management of the home's functioning.

Family relations are very important in order to perceive woman's position in society. The woman's role as mother and daughter is reflection of her nature and importance. The mother or female figure became the nurtured, allowed in middle to wealthy class homes, to stay home at leisure, only responsible for the management of household activities and the emotional needs of her family. However, in wealthier homes, the mother was not even responsible for the care of her own children, as nannies and governesses were hired to do so. Not only did the servants make home functioning smoother with less work required of the family members, but it was a mark of a man's success and his wife symbolized that he had provided a lifestyle that enabled her to stay home in leisure, rather than attend to the daily activities of taking care of a home. The servants were not considered part of the family and were often held at the distance.

Daughters were never of so much consequence to a father, so mothers were responsible for their fate. Since the only way of gaining a chance for good living was getting married, mothers were the matchmakers. The best example for this is the character of Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* since "the business of her life was to get her daughters married". She says: "If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for". Mrs. Bennet was persuading her daughter Elizabeth to get married, without Elizabeth's will, that Mr. Bennet said: "Your mother will never see you again if you don't marry Mr. Collins".

Nevertheless, daughters were very attached to their mothers and obedient as well. In *Sense and Sensibility* we can see it through Marianne's character: 'Marianne has promised to be guided by her mother's opinion and she submitted to it therefore without opposition, though she felt it to be entirely wrong'. As Marianne and her sister Elinor were preparing for the journey, Marianne was very anxious for leaving her mother at home, she said: "But my mother, my dearest mother – I feel the justice of what Elinor has urged, and if she were to be made less happy, less comfortable by our absence – Oh! No, nothing should tempt me to leave her".

Families in the past were often numerous. Mrs. Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* has three daughters and Mrs. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* five daughters. Married women would have a child every year!

And how was work divided among family members?

Fathers did seasonal work in the fields and practiced trades such as blacksmithing or carpentry. Mothers raised children; tended the homes, kitchens, gardens, and dairies; and made the family clothes. Children helped with various tasks around the home and farm.

Families were strictly patriarchal and hierarchal in nature, but when democratic revolution started, things changed. All members of the family became important and more equal than in previous decades. Children were no longer considered "little adults", but human beings who needed affection, guidance, and cultivation in order to become mature people. Likewise, women began to undergo significant change.

Modern family relations are different. Mothers have even greater role than fathers, who used to be dominant figures. Not only do women take care of a house and children, but also make money, support family; some of them even have a better job than their husbands. Children are way too much spoilt. When they come of age they behave very independently. They are free to do what they want, to get married when they want and to whom they choose.

Since women enjoy the same education as men do, and are allowed to do the same jobs, they are more occupied with self-actualization and therefore have fewer children. Mothers and fathers participate in raising children equally. Hence, nowadays women work hard for knowledge and accomplishments, and don't feel as if they are subordinated.

## Education and Inheritance

We cannot talk about society now and before without mentioning social differences because "the drama and the comedy of Austen's novels are dependent on a sharp awareness of fine social distinctions". It is important to point out the roles people can have and on which the whole society system is based. Ever since society exists social differences are evident. Through the time it has become an important factor in interpersonal relations. People have always been aware of it endeavoring to cope with it. How did women find their way in it? We should start with education since today everybody tries to be well educated and to find a good job.

Anti-intellectualism was implicit in the "cult of true womanhood." Women were not expected to use logic or reason, only to exhibit morality and domesticity. Consequently, female education was designed to maintain the dichotomy of spheres; schools prepared men for careers and trained them to think, whereas women learned to be worthy companions for their husbands, good managers of their households, and virtuous examples for their children. Nevertheless, women could take courses in spelling and reading, moral and natural philosophy, arithmetic, chemistry, astronomy, geography, history, and drawing, among numerous household crafts. The destiny of women was obviously, to become at some time spouse and mother of a family, and as such her sphere of action was the domestic fire-side. In order therefore to become a good wife and mother of a family, and to act usefully and blessingly within the circle of her family, she needed to possess all those attributes such as knowledge and habits, which were required of a good housewife and mother of a family. If a woman was displeased and unhappy with her status, it was her fault for failing to strive for her fulfillment which was inherent in her nature and in her domestic environment.

Women weren't ignorant; only that, since there was no *requirement* for academic education for women, and very little opportunity for women to use such knowledge (so that for women learning is only for "the improvement of her mind"), therefore it depended very strongly on what kind of

instruction each woman's parents offered her in childhood, and on the individual inclinations of the woman herself (as in the Bennet family), intelligent girls could even have an advantage over boys in being able to more or less choose their own studies, and in not being subject to the rather mixed blessings of a more uniform Classical curriculum.

In the novels, Darcy makes the remark that besides the accomplishments, a woman "must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading".

National and state constitutions included little mention of the rights of women. In most cases, her right to hold property was either denied or restricted, and she had no right to make a will, enter a contract, or sue in court without her husband's consent.

In Jane Austen's time, there was no real way for young women of the "genteel" classes to strike out on their own or be independent. Professions, the universities, politics, etc. were not open to women. Few occupations were open to them, and those few that were (such as being a governess, i.e. a live-in teacher for the daughters or young children of a family) were not highly respected, and did not generally pay well or have very good working conditions. Therefore most "genteel" women could not get money except by marrying for it or inheriting it (and since the eldest son generally inherits the bulk of an estate, as the "heir", a woman can only really be an "heiress" if she has no brothers). Only a rather small number of women were what could be called professionals, who through their own efforts earned an income sufficient to make themselves independent, or had a recognized career.

There was no a centrally-organized system of state-supported education. There were local charity or church-run day schools. "Genteel" children might be educated at home by their parents, particularly when young or by live-in governesses or tutors; or by going off to a private boarding school or to live with a tutor (as Edward Ferrars went to Mr. Pratt's in *Sense and Sensibility*). There might also be lessons with outside "masters" (specialists such as piano teachers, etc.). Some local "Grammar" upwardly mobile boys, but did not admit girls. The type of education depended on the preferences and financial resources of the parents in each family (thus without Darcy's father's help, Wickham's father "would have been unable to give him a gentleman's education").

Since women did not usually have careers as such, and were not "citizens" in the sense of being directly involved in politics, there was little generally-perceived need for such higher education for them, and most writers on the subject of "female education" preferred that women receive a practical (and religious) training for their domestic role. Politics was one sphere in which women failed to gain any influence for several decades to come. Americans generally believed that equal political rights would lead to the disorganization of the family institution and destruction of the woman as the moral helpmate of the man.

The seeming preoccupation with money in connection with marriage in Jane Austen's work may mislead modern readers. While there is no lack of greed and shallow materialism on the part of some characters, even sensible people must devote serious thought to this topic, since it is rather foolhardy to marry without having a more or less guaranteed income in advance - not only was marriage for life, but there was no social security, old age pensions, unemployment compensation, health insurance, etc.

By the end of the 19th century, it became evident that college-educated women did not marry as often as other women. Regardless of who did the counting, the figures always showed that at least a fourth of women who graduated from college never married, more that double the proportion of non-college women. And, if they married at all, they did so later in life, and consequently had fewer children. As a result, women's higher education came under fire for having a subversive effect on the traditional concept of women and family. The intent of educating women - making them better wives and mothers - showed every indication of doing just the opposite. Once doors had been opened, expectations raised and new skills learned, how women used their education or what conclusions they drew from it were not always what their teachers, or society, intended.

In order to understand entails, the first thing to consider is the importance that ownership of land had, both in the England of Jane Austen's time and in England for centuries previous to her day. Ownership of land wasn't just an ornament to the family (in the way that a collection of paintings or a library might be considered an ornament). Land was what made a family part of the aristocracy or gentry. Ownership of land produced an income that was steady, predictable, and recurring. That income was what freed the family from the necessity to earn their living by daily effort. It freed them to secure and enjoy an education, to, as they chose, dabble in the arts and sciences, become involved in politics, or lead a life of idleness and refinement. This gave ownership of land a cachet that went beyond ownership of cash or movable goods. A landed estate was The Patrimony; it conferred status in society, not just on one person for one generation, but on the family so long as it lasted.

This fact wasn't lost on members of the gentry and aristocracy. Nor were they blind to two real dangers that threaten a landed estate: dissipation by sale, if the head of the family at any point in time (a wastrel, say, or a foolish speculator) were to sell his land to raise funds, and then fritter away the sales proceeds; and subdivision (if an estate were divided equally between all sons or children over several generations, then a single Patrimony, sufficient to make its holder a gentleman and member of the gentry, becomes a multitude of smaller patrimonies that, individually, don't qualify his descendants for the same social status).

The result is that the whole family sinks into obscurity, which was held to be a bad thing. The answer to this problem is primogeniture among male heirs, which keeps The Patrimony itself intact and under the control of the head of the family in each generation, though at the cost of unfairness to other surviving children of the family head.

If the family head dies without sons, then by operation of common law, the estate would be inherited equally by all the man's daughters. If there were several daughters, they each would inherit an equal share, and the subdivision problem occurs. But even if the head of the family died leaving only one daughter, the daughter almost surely will marry - and at her death her heirs would be, presumably, the children she had with her husband.

Daughters almost never inherit, of course, like the Bennet's in *Pride and Prejudice* or the Dashwood sisters in *Sense and Sensibility*, might even lose their home at their father's death to a sometimes quite remote male relative, through the system of "entail". Nor are they expected to earn their own living, since for women of this class to work - as a governess, for example, was to risk losing all respectability. Bennet sisters' father's will might have provided them with a settlement of a capital which yields a more or less adequate annual income, but their (and their family's) best hope of financial and social security is to marry well.

In *Pride and Prejudice* "Mrs. Bennet was beyond the reach of reason; and she continued to rail bitterly against the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters, in favour of a man whom nobody cared anything about". Nobody in the Bennet line would consider the prospect of this to be a good thing, and so the answer was to make provision to extend primogeniture to the entire male line, not just to the male sons of a given holder of a landed estate. Primogeniture, which sought to preserve estates by passing them down through the male line rather than dividing them equally between several children, is responsible for the precarious circumstances of many of Austen's characters.

## Conclusion

We can say that women have what they wanted. Now, they have freedom, they have rights, but there is a certain price they're paying for those rights they've gained, and society feels its consequences, too.

Namely, becoming more equal to men, women have to act as if they were men. Since they can get any job they want, they aren't expected to raise children, but to make their achievement and fulfill their bosses' orders. Women have felt enticing men's power, they've entangled themselves into men's world, and once they were praised highly and became their own masters, it was hard to give it up. So, what happens with *loving wife* and *caring mother*? Where is she in this "women's progress" story? Well, women can still fulfill their primary duties, but now they can choose in which way and to which degree they will support it.

The world's developing fast and it spares nobody. It is expected of people and therefore of women to adapt to everything new that's coming, and adaptation requires changes. Women feel the advantage of the modern society, but also shoulder its disadvantages, and make sacrifices. They have the right to choose, to control their own lives, but then they get confused whether to follow the example of a traditional woman or to be a modern one. Each woman has a tendency to her natural duties – to be a housewife, a wife and a mother. However, nowadays women are allowed to be bosses, great leaders, politicians, and even presidents, so they get stuck in a difficult position. On one hand, there are the ones who live in a family atmosphere with kids and a husband, and on the other hand, there are the ones with a great career and a life without "dirty nappies". They envy each other for those things they couldn't attain.

Having gained many rights women became responsible for their lives. Now as they can choose, they feel all the consequences of their choices. In the past they were subordinated, they had to obey, they lived life in a way they were told to, but they lived it to the full extent. They knew what they could do and what they couldn't and they weren't irresolute.

Now, trying to get everything life offers, women get nothing for real in the end. There are so many things to be lived, and if they miss something they feel as they haven't lived. Now ask yourself - Was it so bad in the past?

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