

Comment on the appropriateness of the title in Pride and Prejudice. // The interplay of pride and prejudice in Austen's novel. [Darcy is an ideal match for Elizabeth]

① Pride and Prejudice was originally entitled First Impressions which too was a fairly apt title. Here Austen wanted to show that first impressions could be negative and critical and not always positive and sympathetic. Consequently the central characters Elizabeth and Darcy, instead of falling in love at first sight, get prejudiced against each other. And the novel tells us how these first impressions governed by pride and prejudice are first confirmed and later inverted. -73

② However, when Austen revised and recast the novel, she dropped the first title in preference to a more appropriate, literary and sophisticated title - Pride and Prejudice. Austen probably took the new title from Fanny Burney's Cecilia where in the closing pages one of the characters Dr. Lyster propounds a moral: "The whole of this unfortunate business... has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE..." The present title is so appropriate that it hardly needs any defence or justification, and all that one can do is to explain its significance. 91

③ Usually it is believed that in Pride and Prejudice Darcy represents pride while Elizabeth represents prejudice. But the novel is not so sharp a picture of black and white. Darcy and Elizabeth are not just embodiments of humours or bloodless abstractions. They are living, highly complex and dynamic characters. The fact is that both of them are proud as well as prejudiced. Darcy is proud of his social superiority, his refinement, and it is his pride that leads him to a general prejudice against the rural gentry much beneath him in social hierarchy. On the other hand, Elizabeth is also proud of her perception, her superior personality and her intellectual sharpness. 112

④ Nevertheless, it is Darcy's pride which is ^{the} root-cause of the misunderstanding between Elizabeth and himself. On his very first appearance in the novel, he is declared to be "the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world." Wickham, Darcy's adversary, tells Elizabeth that "almost all his actions may be traced to pride; and pride has often been his best friend." And he analyses it as 'family pride', 'filial pride', and 'brotherly

pride'. And this pride clouds his judgement.

Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy, on the other hand, stems from overhearing the latter's remark at Meryton ball: "She is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me." With this humiliating remark Darcy wounds Elizabeth's pride. Further, Darcy's confession at Netherfield—"My good opinion once lost is lost for ever"—deepens her prejudice. She now begins wilfully to misrepresent all his utterances, all his actions. Consequently her prejudice clouds her judgement too.

However, their process of self-discovery starts at Rosings. Here Lady Catherine's vulgarity and ill-breeding makes Darcy realise that refinement of manners is no monopoly of the aristocrats. Besides Caroline Bingley's hypocrisy and selfishness were revealed to him. Finally, Elizabeth's angry refusal of his proposal proves to him the futility of the acquirements he had been taking pride in.

Elizabeth's moment of self-awakening comes on the receipt of Darcy's letter and her gradual recognition of the validity of his objections to the Jane-Bingley marriage. She is now ashamed to think how she had been 'blind', partial, prejudiced, absurd.

So she revises her opinion on Darcy. And Darcy's role in the Lydia-Wickham affair helps her realise that Darcy has completely shed his earlier pride. In turn, she too sheds her initial prejudice and recognizes that Darcy is exactly the man who, in temperament and talents, would most suit her. Thus, the stress imposed by pride, vanity and prejudice are gradually overridden by a strong, deep love and understanding.

It is interesting to note that almost every character in P+P exhibits too much or too little pride, sham pride or genuine pride. Being vain and snobbish, Bingley's sisters are proud. Similarly, Lady Catherine's pride is concerned with etiquette and Mr Collins is a mixture of "pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility".

Thus, the twin motifs of pride and prejudice crop up at every turn and twist of the novel and shape its course. Jane Austen is not a psychological novelist; her forte is the delineation of social manners. But by giving her novel the title P+P she not only emphasizes the basic traits in the characters, especially of the hero and the heroine, but also indicates her interest in the delicate psychological study of the interaction of elemental human emotions like pride + prejudice. Thus, the title of the novel is apt and fully justified.