



Beauty Standards: A comparative study of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mahashweta*

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Abstract:

This article attempts to show that beauty and physical appearance plays a major role in our society from pre-modernism to post-modernism. Beauty standards are given more importance not only in a country like India but also in other countries like UK, US, and so on. People judge others mostly based on their physical appearance and beauty, instead of their character and behavior. This article analyses the role of beauty in these revolutionary years, from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which underlined the social psychology of beauty standards to Sudha Murty, an Indian contemporary writer, who has vividly exposed ideals of beauty and appearance in this current society in her work titled *Mahashweta*. By juxtaposing these two works, one can precisely understand the place that beauty holds in our civilization.

Keywords: *physical appearance, beauty standards, psychology, society.*

Introduction:

Jane Austen, an English writer, whose work stands out for its realism, awareness, and intelligence in the detailed portrayal of characters. She gained more fame only after her death by the publication of her six full-length novels. One of the novels is *Pride and Prejudice*, a romantic novel that underlines the cause of every love and relationship is beauty. It also emphasizes people's prejudice against others based on their dress and physical appearance. It was first originally titled *Impression* and then published in the title *Pride and Prejudice*.

Sudha Murty, an Indian editor, proficient author in English, Marathi, and Kannada, a philanthropist and is currently a chairperson of the Infosys foundation. This eminent Padma Shri awardee authored a famous novel called *Mahashweta*, which epitomizes the psyche of a man's personality in marrying a beautiful woman. She has a disparate identity of her own as a writer and as a social worker, who has always been an advocate of women's rights and a pioneer in the development of education.

A Glimpse of the novels:

Pride and Prejudice is a love story of Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, both of whom have to overcome their prejudice in order to end up together. Throughout the novel other than Elizabeth Bennet and Darcy, we also can see many other love stories and couples that end up together in the end. But here the basic stimulation or the primary element behind these love stories is beauty and appearance which can be seen in this novel.

Similar to *Mahashweta*, which tells the tale of Anupama and Anand's marriage breaking down after she learns she has leukoderma, which impairs her beauty, Anupama's battle to succeed in society after being dumped by her husband and in-laws is the central theme of the entire book. Overall, it is a tale of bravery in the face of appearance-based betrayal.

Beauty Standards:

Beauty standards are ideals of feminine beauty with precise measurements of beauty, pertaining to traits that are implanted in women from birth until death. These requirements for maintaining one's appearance and needing to meet these particular criteria frequently make life unsafe. The psychology of society's conception of beauty is centered on women's size and weight. For many years, these guidelines and criteria have been observed.

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* which is written in the year 1813, focus on the love story between the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet and her lover Darcy. It has also focused on other minor characters' love stories. Here, besides this, Austen indirectly lights on the beauty standards and physical appearance that stand as the basic step or foundation for these love stories. In the story, many women were attracted to Bingley, not for his character but for his good-looking and gentlemanlike appearance and in the first meeting of Jane and Bingley at the ball, both admired each other, Bingley mesmerized by Jane's beauty and physical appearance danced with her and proposed her.

Meanwhile, Darcy had also drawn the attention of almost every woman, in fact, the ladies declared Darcy to be a nobleman and much more handsome than Bingley without knowing anything about him. Even Darcy had also commented on Elizabeth by her physical appearance saying "she is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me" (pap pn:16). These scenes and dialogues justify the first title "impression" and the later "prejudice" which is all based on their physical appearance and the beauty.

Likewise, the novel *Mahashweta* written in the year 2000 focuses on Anupama whose marriage falls apart when her husband came to know about her leukoderma disease. Anand who is allured by Anupama's beauty falls in love with her and marries. After some time, when she discovers a white patch on her foot and learns that she has leukoderma. She was abandoned and thrown out of the house by her in-laws. Anand is a doctor and had a lot of pride in his wife's beauty. When he came to know about her condition, he too abandoned her and he doesn't want to live with her.

Anupama in this novel faced more problems from men because of her beauty meanwhile suffered a lot when that beauty faded because of her disease. This story shows the harsh reality of this modern society, that women are measured and valued by their beauty and physical appearance not by their talents and knowledge.

Conclusion:

The beauty standard is a specific standard that is implanted by ourselves and that plays a major role in our society. This beauty standard has its timeline from ancient times to current times. It is something that keeps on developing with us like a parasite.

The two novels *Pride and Prejudice* clearly show that physical appearance is given importance in earlier days, whereas, *Mahashweta* which is written in the present times also shows the traces of beauty standards that are present in society. Thus, by this, we can clearly understand those beauty standards were there in the past and also in the present.

It is only the standards that have been changing from time to time, in the past day's ideals of beauty standards are defined by chubby and rosy cheeks whereas, in the present, the standards are defined by a thin body with a jawline. But the psychology of society in valuing physical appearance doesn't change.

It was there in the past and it is still in the present.

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