

Revisiting Jane Austen through *Austenistan*: Pakistani and Western Perspectives

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Abstract

The paper tends to focus on contextualizing *Austenistan* (2018) by considering Jane Austen's popular novels. The way Austen, through her novels, engages with the world today establishes the breadth and endlessness of her narratives that surpass physical and social barricades. A memorable exemplar of her pervasive need reveals in the Jane Austen Society of Pakistan in South Asia, which made-up Austen's cherished protagonists as contemporary Pakistani (socially upper class) ladies in a variety of stories entitled *Austenistan*. The paper compares *Austenistan* with Austen's writings, espousing the associations, variances, and endowments between them. The appearance and non-appearance of current social concerns in *Austenistan* and Austen, commensurately calls the review of the amounts of societal duty and motivation in these writings. Lastly, distinguishing visibly about colonisation, I look at the effect of Jane Austen's novels in empire formation.

Keywords

Austenistan, Colonisation, Jane Austen, Marriage, Short Stories

1. Introduction

In colonisation, "European culture often, if not always, characterised itself in such a way as simultaneously to validate its own preferences while also advocating those preferences in conjunction with distant imperial rule" (Said, 1994). Seven affiliates of the Jane Austen Society of Pakistan co-authored an assortment of short stories titled *Austenistan*, which re-envision Jane Austen's protagonists as contemporary Pakistani, socially upper class, women.

Published in 2018, *Austenistan* includes seven short stories: "Begum Saira Returns," motivated by *Lady Susan* (1871); "Emaan Ever After," enthused by *Emma* (1815); and the other five stories, i.e., "The Fabulous Banker Boys," "The

Mughal Empire,” “The Autumn Ball,” “Only the Deepest Love”, and “On the Verge,” inspired by *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). All stories span over 30 pages. Although the stories deviate in portrayal, certain ideas penetrate steadily: the ubiquity and frustration of marriage, matchmaking and wooing practices, lure of worldly and superficial facets of an individual’s personality and appearances, the affection for and connection with Western civilisation, and the display of recent societal circumstances.

The writers in *Austenistan* take upon themselves the burden of receiving it straight and enunciating it straight. All stories in *Austenistan* are stand-alone however, as a collection, they supplement and complement each other. The writers of *Austenistan* have fashioned a multifaceted and ever-mounting arena of everything that is linked with Austen.

Many researches have been done on Austen’s wit and occasional sarcasm and keen observations made on the social mores, expressed in a limpid prose, which strikes the contemporary reader by its modernity. The researches centre about marriage, ostensibly a most mundane subject, but for most people also a most momentous one regardless of how thoughtlessly entered into. However, my main thesis of the author is that Austen was as relevant to the English society it presented as she is to the Pakistani society. The pleasure in reading Austen consists to a large extent in the delineation of the various verbal stratagems employed. To really enjoy *Austenistan* you need to be familiar with her novels. However, those parts pertaining to with what I was familiar with I read with pleasure, not so much because of the insights the author professes to impart, as the simple enjoyment we all find in gossip, meaning speaking about people we know, be they fictional but because of its relevance to the people around us. Or maybe especially because they are fictional, and cynically we can argue that we are often more intimately acquainted with fictional figures than we are with people of flesh and blood among our acquaintances.

Through Austen, we are able to anticipate the actions of others, through the imaginative effort of putting ourselves in their shoes. By comparing *Austenistan* to Austen’s original novels, we find how much psychologically does really Pakistani parents enter into the process of finding perfect matches for their daughters, and thus how much deception and frustration along with the obsession with marriage is employed?

2. Marriage, Matchmaking, and Wooing

Possibly the ostensible equivalent of 18th century England and present Pakistan is the eventual burden of getting married and the appropriate wooing practice. The ultimate resolution and expectation of rich women is equivalent to those of Austen’s female characters i.e., wed a rich man of the similar or higher position and resources. This is where the Aunties in *Austenistan* emanate into performance. In the social phase recognised as the “December wedding season” (which is usually a time period from December to March), the elderly ladies aka Aunties

are invited to marriages hoping to get suitable marriage suggestions (Sukhera, 2018). Roya, the narrator of “On the Verge”, equates her “Sweetie Aunty” to a “Fairy Godmother” as she obtained an invitation “to a ball, and in the English countryside”, (Sukhera, 2018). However, the effort of an Aunty is not always valued. In “The Mughal Empire”, fixed immediately after the wedding of Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, or in this setting, Erum and Mr. Dayyan, an anxious Kamila Mughal (comparable to Caroline Bingley) gets unwelcoming report about her expected dance-partner by nobody but Mrs. Bilal (or Austen’s Mrs. Bennet).

“I just got all the stats on Siraj Khan,” said Mrs. Bilal in an excited and loud whisper. “He’s a lawyer, works at some fancy law firm, lives in London, has a fabulous flat in Notting Hill, both his parents are dead...”

Kamila glowered at Mrs. Bilal. “And why would I be interested in this?”

“My dear, he’s so eligible! And Naheed told me that he’s also very nice—kind, polite, good values—so that’s a bonus!”

“Uh! Aunty, he was at school with me. He was one of the nerds.”

“Darling, it’s the nerds that make the best husbands. Always marry the nerds!” Kamila was appalled. This talk was vulgar (Sukhera, 2018).

Indiscreet or not, Mrs. Bilal’s focus must have confirmed the setting to a certain level as the story finishes with Kamila’s wedding to Siraj. Moreover, ignoring or defying an Aunty is a risky trade, for, part of what marks them so intimidating is their capacity to boost or damage the prestige. For instance, when Leena, i.e. Lydia in “The Fabulous Banker Boys”, tries to forge a relationship with notorious Dilawar (Wickham), Mrs. Baig worries, “the catty aunties will see her, assume the worst and she will get a ‘fast’ reputation.” (Sukhera, 2018). In *Austenistan*, as in Austen’s England, repute is important to a woman’s future—a single mistake may push all of Lahore’s Aunties into a surge of chatter.

Common people in Pakistan consider marriage as an inescapable vocation. Daughters—unbeknown to them—are taught from youth to seek this job. For example, Mrs. Baig explicates that school is more than teaching; it is an interacting place. In initial years, vocations in the corporate domain are supposed as corresponding their *real* occupation. Not only there is a ceaseless concern to wed, but also the consideration of marrying the right kind of person. Although the plots of “The Autumns Ball”, “On the Verge”, and “The Mughal Empire” do not precisely follow any Austen narration, their stories frequently sketch the situations of Austen’s woman characters.

In the invite to the Ball in the UK, Roya perceives it as an opportunity to promote her blog, however her Sweetie Aunty has some other uses in mind; “‘Blog?’ Sweetie Aunty said in disgust. ‘Do you know what Saqnain Tanvir [the host] is set to inherit?’” (Sukhera, 2018). The worry to wed marks a marriage proposal feels “like an accomplishment.” Emaan expected “being married once would kind of take the pressure off but it turns out dating after divorce is hard.” (Sukhera, 2018). Once the women get married, they polish their matchmaking

abilities for single contacts and female offsprings. We are reminded of Mr. Baig and Mr. Bennet when they both are requested to see the “banker boys” and the latest occupant of Netherfield Hall as the poise forbids women from starting such interaction. In *Austenistan* too, it is the wives who pressurise their husbands to gain invitations to especially big weddings as they expect to find fitting bachelors at such gatherings.

Suitability requirements of Austen’s England are somewhat comparable to those of 21st century Pakistan. Laleen Sukhera (the editor of *Austenistan*) clarifies, “I know her books are 200 years old and set in small English county towns and villages but, really, her themes, her characters, her situations, her plots, they could have been written for us now.” (Mohsin, 2017)

If a man likes a woman, he might ask a mutual friend to make the introduction, or else he will point her out to his mother or aunt. If they do not know her, they will swiftly consult a friend or relation who does. Within minutes they will have the lowdown on the girl: her marital status, family background, wealth, age, education, job and reputation—whether she has been soiled by previous relationships and if so, how publicly. If her profile meets with familial approval, a meeting might be orchestrated. (Mohsin, 2017)

At the meeting in *Pride and Prejudice*, upon reaching at the scene, “Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien, and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year.” (Austen, 2000). The rapidity of propagation in *Austenistan* and Austen proves the implication of social position and prosperity.

In *Austenistan* if a girl has reached her 30s and is still single, she is “advised not to be ‘too choosy’” or “get set in [her] ways”, or she will be reflected incapable to “conform to the desires of her husband’s family.” (Mohsin, 2017) Comparing Austen’s heroine, however, a talented Pakistani girl is not one with “a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, all the modern languages”, as Caroline Bingley sketches, but relatively one with a socially tolerable vocation. (Austen, 2000)

Roughly fifty years ago, separation in Pakistan “was unthinkable, so great was the shame” (Mohsin, 2017). If a marriage were devastation, wives would be expected to “cope up” and live drearily (Mohsin, 2017). The past 30 years have witnessed nonconformity to this conventional concept, and the divorce today is rather common. For divorced women, *Persuasion* (1817)—a narrative created on the “second chance at love” notion—is mostly tempting, and the incidence of divorce too means an increase in fitting suitors. The current profusion of tech tycoons in Pakistan also matches the reality of new wealth in Austen’s tales. Through occupation or especially through marine occupations, if proper wealth is built, lineage is disregarded. In Pakistan, arranged marriages—arrangements stretched between families with small or no dialogue with the man and woman involved—protect heritages, prestige, and estate and compatibility between them

is not given enough importance. Henceforward the warm approval of matrimony amongst blood relations in Pakistan; and we notice that a big number of the populace is wedded to the children of father's or mother's siblings (Mohsin, 2017).

Every novel of Austen finish with the joyful marriage of her protagonist to a man of wealth. Faiza Khan, the editorial director of *Bloomsbury India*, elucidates,

We love Austen so much because she can deliver a happy ending, we can believe in spite of seeing the world just as it is with all its unfairness and pettiness and exploitation and cruelty. She redresses the wrongs of her society on paper because that is all she or any of us can hope to do (Mohsin, 2017).

Considering Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Baig: examples of the conventional womanly responsibility, while perceiving their discrete irritations with their liberal-minded daughters, Elizabeth and Elisha, the societal hopes for girls are satisfactorily described. Mrs. Bennet grieves her husband's prejudice concerning Elizabeth as she "is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia." (Austen, 2000). Correspondingly, Mrs. Baig doubts Elisha's bright future, for "No man likes a headstrong and blunt wife." (Sukhera, 2018). She ventures to "teach her to at least appear more subservient and pliant", for, these virtues are pleasing for men. (Sukhera, 2018). In addition to an agreeable nature, a special aptitude is important. Saira, from "Begum Saira Returns", was "painstakingly instructed on how to dress for various occasions, how to host a party, how to make the perfect cup of tea, and how to mask disinterest and converse with people she didn't especially want to speak to", completely expecting that these talents would tempt a rich husband (Sukhera, 2018).

If marital relationship is the prime objective and hope for a lady, thenceforth remaining stable in the undertaking is praiseworthy. As enlightened in Austen, "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance", yet triumph of keeping it intact is accomplished through attaining an apt equal (Austen, 2000). As Jane, *Pride and Prejudice*, tells her dad about her commitment to the opulent Mr. Bingley, his initial response is "I congratulate you, Jane." (Austen, 2000). Such words of admiration are apposite as Jane accomplished her sole determination of obtaining a marriage proposal. This is made chiefly effective by getting a marriage proposal that will help her younger sisters. However, for a woman in Pakistan, marriage is more about protection than contentment.

Not only there is an ongoing concern to wed but similarly to espouse the well-settled person. The idea of an upcoming engagement must uphold the sociocultural prospects enforced on a girl. The state for a socially beneficial marriage also gives Elisha's worry that her "unsuitable family" will deject Mr. Dar's affections in "The Fabulous Banker Boys."

Remembering Kamila, if she decides not to marry, she will be the annoyance

for Pakistan's Aunties. Myra, Roya's sister in "On the Verge" "had decided to pursue a career early in life and barely got the time to meet men." (Sukhera, 2018). Therefore, she befits a premonition for unmarried ladies. Sweetie Aunty beseeches Roya to meet the eligible bachelor and says, "Look what happened to your poor sister! Bechari (poor) Myra, still single at thirty-five and working like a drudge, refusing to let me find her anyone." (Sukhera, 2018). However, an appropriate occupation may be considered an equivalent to matrimony, it is never an alternative for girls in a Pakistani society. At the conclusion of "On the Verge", Roya chooses to chase a man she considers to be a guard, determines to finish the obligation to "following the money", sure to mark her "own way in the world." (Sukhera, 2018). Paradoxically, this choice to neglect the social exercise is really her remarkable achievement. Roya thrives in challenging the society just so far as it proves a freedom of intellect. However, these qualities are conquered by the suitor's upper class standing. Would Pakistani culture still encourage Roya's selection if the fellow were really a guard?

Although the stories of "The Autumn Ball", "On the Verge", and "The Mughal Empire" do not exactly follow any Austen's novel, they mainly depict the state of Austen's female protagonists. The imminent danger of perpetual celibacy burdens Austen protagonists. In her texts, marriage is "the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantest preservative from want." (Austen, 2000). Moreover, an occupation does not discharge oneself the burden of hunting a marriage proposal. As professed in "The Autumn Ball", it is considered essential for Maya to leave her job being the deputy editor and rather choose to be a housewife.

The penchant for western culture vis-à-vis Pakistani culture in *Austenistan* highlights the tenacious results of colonisation on the Pakistani society. For example, Susan Morgan articulates that, "Austen's social concerns are with human relations, not society." (Morgan, 1975). However, in *Persuasion*, when Anne Elliot and Captain Harville deliberate upon the truthfulness of men over women (they equally exemplify their gender), the theme of literary account produces an inspirational reflexion:

Captain Harville: "As I was saying we shall never agree, I suppose, upon this point... But let me observe that all histories are against you."

Anne Elliot: "... if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story." (Austen, 2008).

Though not a clear social allusion, it focuses on gender disparity in education and literature. Captivatingly, Harville, not Anne, initially admits that men produce all "prose and verse" and, therefore, their representations of female gender may not be neutral. Where Harville classifies the prejudice, Anne provides motive for it. Boys have the advantage of "so much higher a degree" of schooling, that the undertaking to compose is completely in their support. Womenfolk have no assistance of shielding themselves in written literature, therefore, whi-

chever conviction spread via male writers is believed to be unbearable. In *Austenistan*, arguments of dissimilarity like these are expressed with noticeable present happenings, emphasising on social issues. For instance, Saira (“Begum Saira Returns”) assures herself with; “We [Pakistan] have a woman prime minister, I can attend a wedding on my own.” (Sukhera, 2018). This sign sketches the individuality and motivation potential of a female prime minister. In a patriarchal society such as Pakistan, it is anticipated that women are appreciated more when seen in social meetings with their husbands. In “Only the Deepest Love”, Samina is cynical about the present political vision since “Only a few months ago, one of his [her student’s father] close associates had been accused of the rape of a girl who had gone missing a week after the news broke. But as was the case with most sordid scandals involving powerful perpetrators and powerless victims, news outlets conveniently forgot the story soon after.” (Sukhera, 2018). Thus, Saira is open-minded while Samina is dissatisfied, however, to get her they let current proceedings influence their activities.

3. Dancing

One of the main features of wooing practice in Austen’s novels and in the short stories of *Austenistan* is dancing; quite a ceremonial dance practice at any ball or a bridal ceremony in which a man should invite a woman to pair with him in a public, directed arrangement. This exercise is as fresh in current Pakistan as it was in Austen’s England. Much like marriage, whose recognisable resolution is more for society’s advantage than its constituents, dancing is intended to be a display. However, people not dancing themselves analyze the dancing couples with admiration, resentment, or hate.

The important drive to dance in Austen’s novels and in the stories in *Austenistan* is indubitable. In *Emma*, Harriet Smith considers Mr. Knightley more respectful for requesting her to dance while she was deprived of a partner than she does Mr. Churchill, who safeguarded her from gypsies. Moreover, in each but two of the *Austenistan* stories, the female protagonist encounters her important man dancing. Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* (1803) explains the connection between dance and marriage to Catherine Morland by saying “I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage.” (Austen, 2006).

Although Mr. Tilney’s thought on dancing and matrimony as activities that help the parties mutually is alluring, it is barely a fact. We understand that in *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy as well as Sir Lucas could not inspire Elizabeth as her refusal to dance with Mr. Darcy is essentially her revenge to Mr. Darcy’s censure at the gathering where he pronounced her as “tolerable”, but “not handsome enough” to entice him into dancing (Austen, 2000). Elizabeth’s egotism stops her from taking a man who insulted her. Comparably, by declining his offer to dance with him, she can perchance initiate a comparable damage. In “The Fabulous Banker Boys”, Elisha shows a similar response. When Faiz Dar’s Aunty urges Faiz to dance, Elisha replies, “I’m sure there are plenty of girls who would dance with you, but I’m not one of them.” (Sukhera, 2018). In order to clarify

her reply, she had actually eavesdropped Mr. Dar converse with Mr. Baig, “Elisha is just OK. She isn’t hot enough to tempt me.” (Sukhera, 2018). Her wounded pride requires vengeance. Therefore, she is engrossed in her independent practice of agency i.e., refusal.

At the wedding in “The Fabulous Banker Boys”, “the bridesmaids had all eyes on them as they carried out their special tasks. Enjoying their time in the lime-light, they pouted and posed for selfies for their Instagram and SnapChat accounts, some being picked up by glossies always on the lookout for pretty faces at society weddings.” (Sukhera, 2018). In Austen, “Loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable; that one false step involves her in endless ruin.” (Austen, 2000). In *Austenistan*, the dangers of losing reputation are eventual while the disgrace intensifies.

4. Education

University tutoring in the upper class of *Austenistan* is accomplished totally abroad: normally in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Each of the stories encompasses at least a unique allusion to a character’s transnational schooling. Mr. Dar in “The Fabulous Banker Boys” went to “Exeter in England.” (Sukhera, 2018). Saira’s daughter in “Begum Saira Returns” is “studying at Colombia.” (Sukhera, 2018). Emaan in “Emaan Ever After” “did Economics at LSE” (Sukhera, 2018), whereas Kamila in “The Mughal Empire” has a “degree from Princeton.” (Sukhera, 2018). This act of studying abroad echoes the resolve for “acquiring polish overseas” (Sukhera, 2018), an anticipated condition in upper class Pakistan specifically regarding the selection of a suitable bachelor. The indication that grace cannot be attained in Pakistan, verifies the claim that *Austenistan*’s characters regard Pakistan as lacking in taste. The broad allusions to imported possessions complement the argument.

5. Imports

Western culture is obvious in *Austenistan*. The style is somewhat inverted with a strong affection for non-Pakistani culture. The tempting reality of non-Pakistani imports and facilities as presented in *Austenistan* cannot be trifled. For instance, the Baigs have a “1999 model Toyota Corolla,” (Sukhera, 2018) and the driveway of Emaan’s social event is “dotted with various Land Cruisers and Mercs.” (Sukhera, 2018). After automobiles when we consider the playthings we realise that, Saira recalls Masooma (her offspring) and her companion since she was an infant “playing with their Barbies.” (Sukhera, 2018). Expectedly, paraphernalia and electronic applications from the West to encroach upon the characters’ living.

The characters in *Austenistan* use western platforms as their important opportunities for communiqué, sociability, and friendship. In “Emaan Ever After”, Emaan’s “WhatsApp pings with a message”, (Sukhera, 2018) and in “The Mughal Empire”, Kamila gets a “WhatsApp message from Chengiz.” (Sukhera, 2018). In “Only the Deepest Love”, Samina looks at a possible suitor’s “WhatsApp dis-

play picture” even before the wooing process begins with “a few WhatsApp messages.” (Sukhera, 2018). Transport correspondingly falls in the western covering through the recurring usage of Uber. In “On the Verge”, as Roya chooses to get back home, she picks up her mobile to “call an Uber.” (Sukhera, 2018). Therefore, the ways for interaction and transport are governed by western culture.

Similarly, contacts are accomplished with western bases. In “The Autumn Ball”, as Maya returned to Pakistan, “She searched out school friends on Facebook.” (Sukhera, 2018). In an occasional element, characters use Tinder to join prospective spouses. Mr. Dar expresses to Elisha, “I wish I could swipe people away in real life as easily as on Tinder.” (Sukhera, 2018). In supplement to connecting individuals in Pakistan, these podiums link the characters universally. In “On the Verge”, once “someone’s blurry iPhone photo” of Roya occurred on a chat webpage, she got “670 notifications on Facebook alone” and her “Instagram followers had swelled to 200,000+.” (Sukhera, 2018). These platforms are similarly expended to the assistance of people. In “Emaan Ever After”, Emaan’s associate at the London Facebook workplace supports her acquire an occupation in Instagram. Distinctly from the business vocations, female protagonists such as Roya from “On the Verge” run social channels for their blogging jobs. In “The Fabulous Banker Boys”, the girl attendants “pouted and posed for selfies for their Instagram and SnapChat accounts, some being picked up by glossies always on the lookout for pretty faces at society weddings.” (Sukhera, 2018). The supremacy of social modes is evidently extant in “Only the Deepest Love”, where the trending Twitter hashtag, “Jail4Asfandyar”, mirrors a social initiative (Sukhera, 2018). With the ubiquity of social media, a deluge of western verbiage is derived: typically contractions, and pop culture that readily enhances the plot.

The composition performed at the important social events in *Austenistan* is completely exotic. At the Autumn Ball, “The DJ launched the evening with ‘La Bamba’” for “everyone knew it.” (Sukhera, 2018). Later that evening, Maya prepared “some spirited moves to ‘Girls Just Wanna Have Fun’.” (Sukhera, 2018). At Avondon Ball, the intolerable Scott “started gyrating to a Bollywood mash-up with Taylor Swift” on the dance floor (Sukhera, 2018). Indisputably, even the expressions for portrayals are a sign of western domination. In “On the Verge”, Roya elucidates that she cancelled her “Big Fat Pakistani Wedding”, a sarcastic suggestion to the well-regarded American comedy, “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.” (Sukhera, 2018). Next, she explains a “fleet of Skittles-hued sports cars” (Sukhera, 2018) and a drink that “looked like Kryptonite.” (Sukhera, 2018).

The medley of Pakistani and European cultures in the short stories of *Austenistan* exemplifies the authority (in the thoughts of the people) of importations. Each trendy item in *Austenistan* is located overseas, where “abroad” in Austen’s novels usually means exterior to the heroine’s county than her country. In a café, Emaan sees “Karachi’s top one per cent nibbling at their egg-white omelettes and granola bowls with imported berries.” (Sukhera, 2018). Her hosts in the

evening “have exquisite taste—dinner is laid out in the most gorgeous tableware that has been carefully bubble-wrapped and transported, a few dishes at a time, in suitcases from trips abroad.” (Sukhera, 2018). Also, in planning for the marriage ceremony of the time, “Every Aunty was bursting with details, from the choice of the event planners and the caterer’s menus, the invitations printed in India, the singers and bands being flown in, to the bootleggers bribed to ensure only the best sparkling wine for Haroon’s wife.” (Sukhera, 2018). The sign that “the best” must emanate from outside of Pakistan’s borders elucidates how even criteria of delicacy reverberate affection for Anglo-American and European features.

The astonishingly beautiful characters in *Austenistan* have European physicality. In “Emaan Ever After” and “On the Verge”, cool men have “Scandinavian height” (Sukhera, 2018) and “Slavic cheekbones.” (Sukhera, 2018). Erstwhile, they have “classic Hollywood matinee idol features, a straight nose, melting hazel eyes, full lips”. The girls moreover are thought further gorgeous while they are “dressed up with powdered skin and blush.” (Sukhera, 2018). Characters are expected to maintain values of magnificence incorporated from the west. These infiltrated standards increase a societal reserve as they are, by kind, unreachable, and the unlikelihood of acquiring them fundamentally supplements the enticement. This might uphold to inform why, although continually entangled, there is a reason that Pakistan and selective European culture must not intermix. The ridicule is clear in “On the Verge” as Roya yells, “A bhangra? [folk dance and music of the Punjab (north-western India and north-eastern Pakistan) and the popular music genre that emerged from it in the mid-to-late 20th century ... a regular feature of wedding festivities, birthday parties, local fairs, and other celebrations] At your ball? At Avondon Hall? [she] said, wanting the Gainsborough on the nearby wall couldn’t hear [them].” (Sukhera, 2018). Roya complements clarity to this indication by classifying Avondon Hall as a plus for her surprise. That a bhangra must occur at all is adequately shocking, however, the unfitting place worsens her worry. The anxiety befell on her is astonishing as the ball is arranged for a birthday party, and in Pakistan bhangras are usually danced for similar events. Through dialogue, she expects the “Gainsborough on the nearby wall couldn’t hear” suggests that a bhangra is somewhat considered as equal to a contempt, generally as if a position of cultured western people would be embarrassed to watch this kind of a dance being presented in his house. Thus, the perceived dominance of British mores and society is validated in *Austenistan*.

A Pakistani character in “Begum Saira Returns” communicates in a “heavily put-on British accent.” (Sukhera, 2018). Besides, Islamabad housewives value the respected tailor Riaz in “The Autumn Ball” for his skill to “replicate Western clothing.” (Sukhera, 2018). The character in “Only the Deepest Love” remarkably depicts the postcard of her distanced dad and his youthful, British spouse as a persona of “sunny first-world happiness.” (Sukhera, 2018). Preserved in all of these cases is something that cannot be obtained easily. The articulation and fashion are pretence, replica of their superior archetypes.

In *Mansfield Park*, Catherine Morland realises “that if adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad.” (Austen, 2003). Of course, “abroad” in this instance, is a carriage journey to Bath. Indulgence in levels of extravagant fashion that is just discovered overseas appears in *Austenistan* as well. In “The Mughal Empire”, Kamila’s annoyance is in complete intensity around the London shopping binge where Erum’s would-be mother-in-law, “bought Erum luxuries that most girls could only dream of: handbags from Hermès, Chanel, Bottega Veneta and Prada; shoes for every possible occasion in an assortment of styles and colours from Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin, Jimmy Choo, Saint Laurent, Roger Vivier and Dior; lingerie from Rigby & Peller, Agent Provocateur and La Perla, and a designer wardrobe from some of the finest stores on Sloane Street.” (Sukhera, 2018). Although Pakistan has extravagant shopping malls and dress designer clothes of its own, the established liking for those abroad emphasises an ostensible subservience. Though Austen hardly indicates particular trademarks in her novels, the incentives of “abroad” hold the equivalent enticement they do in *Austenistan* justly, for, one cannot tour overseas or obtain possessions without prosperity and freedom. In *Emma*, Frank Churchill “had wanted very much to go abroad—had been very eager indeed to be allowed to travel” (Austen, 2004), however, his aunt forbade him. Now, Frank has the resources for tourism, but not the freedom. Colonel Brandon, for example, “has seen a great deal of the world; has been abroad, has read, and has a thinking mind”, replying “inquiries with readiness of good-breeding and good nature.” (Austen, 2001). His experience and aptitude are indistinctly interwoven to his travels.

6. Sexuality

Austen excludes the information on sex; *Austenistan* contains the situation, however mutually contests their social standards. In a critique “Why There’s No Sex in Jane Austen”, Susan Morgan explicates that the nonappearance of sex in Austen’s tales is perhaps a literary rebellion. To illumine “absence of sex”, she articulates,

when I claim that Austen has gotten rid of the sex, I refer specifically to a literary sexuality, the notion of sexuality in much of eighteenth-century fiction, the notion of sexuality which defines character, and plot, in socio biological terms. That notion does, of course, occur outside novels and outside the eighteenth century, a dark fact which brightens the continuing radicalism of Austen’s work (Morgan, 1987).

The value of producing this “sex-less” account is that female virginity is no longer the foundation for the character-defining conducts of integrity and honesty. Austen rather presents “the simple and endlessly influential point that women can grow, can be educated, can mature, without the catalyst of a penis”, which is the persona for practically all 18th century protagonists. This unlocks the access for personality growth, advanced by a protagonist’s choices, rather

than a hero's control. Morgan elucidates, "Hardy and Eliot were able to explore the evils of a woman being sexually defined by her culture in part because Austen had banished from fiction, and thus effectively revealed as a fiction, the fiction of a woman being sexually defined by nature." (Morgan, 1987). Contrastingly, yet not absurdly, *Austenistan's* gushing forcefulness concerning sex grants is an erratic disobedience of female liberalism.

Whereas the culture of *Austenistan* is extremely conventional, the depiction is not. At a cycling class, Emaan ("Eman Ever After") discovers herself "ruminating over how [her] lady bits are numb from the bike seat and how that's probably the most action they're going to get this year." (Sukhera, 2018). Nonetheless even for Emaan, a divorcee who cannot "keep up the virginal ingénue pretence", signifying not only to her vagina, but also to the prospect for unlawful sex is relatively shocking (Sukhera, 2018). Samina's newlywed cousin ("Only the Deepest Love") struggles to know her husband's clear dearth of interest. She narrates, "Last night, I was crying in bed as quietly as I could, I thought he'd gone to sleep. He got up and told me to get on my knees. I was so pathetically grateful even for this... so I got on my knees and then, nothing, the bastard dry humped me with his shorts on. Then he went for a shower, came back to bed and fell asleep within ten minutes." (Sukhera, 2018). The story endorses Samina's doubts that Sobia's husband is gay. Dismally, "Being gay carried such a stigma that even if parents allowed themselves to suspect such a thing of their child, their 'solution' was marriage, to hell with their lives and the lives of the poor women who never got their chance at love." (Sukhera, 2018). The discourse encompasses some time later in the narrative when Samina recollects, "My colleague Nafisa had gone through this. Her husband refused to consummate the marriage a good six months into their new life. And even when they did it, it was forced, brief and impersonal. He never desired her... Given their conventional upbringing, and the fact that the couple had two young children, divorce wasn't even an option." (Sukhera, 2018). This remembrance indicates the irrational faithfulness to continuing marriage.

Examining the British and French empires, the literary critic Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, informs that "whatever is good or bad about places at home is shipped out and assigned comparable virtue or vice abroad." (Said, 1994). It is predictable thenceforth, that after 200 years of British power, the "vices and virtues" of English culture have spread in Pakistan. To relate this with Austen, Said advances his case by modelling the novel as follows:

An incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic cultural form. Packed into it are both a highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority and power. The novelistic hero and heroine exhibit the restlessness and energy characteristic of the enterprising bourgeoisie, and they are permitted adventures in which their experiences reveal to them the limits of what they can aspire to, where they can go, what they can become. Novels therefore

end... with the protagonists' accession to stability (usually in the form of marriage or confirmed identity, as is the case with novels of Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot) (Said, 1994).

It is apparent why females of the Jane Austen Society of Pakistan maintain so eagerly to Austen—the British culture merged into Pakistani culture. The narrative, as voiced by Said, develops a “knowable community of Englishmen and women” which “shaped the idea of England in such a way as to give it identity, presence, ways of reusable articulation.” (Said, 1994). In other words, narratives, such as those in the Austen standard, are not merely replications of their background, nonetheless also influential features in forming that ethos. Through inserting the culture into text, Austen’s arguments surpass the physical plus time particular limitations to suit “reusable”—not just in exact reinterpretations such as *Austenistan*, moreover in everyday living. Austen’s narrative, which expresses an “attainable quality of life,” (Said, 1994) is nothing excessively unbelievable and her characters and situations are recognisable, which create her an amazingly significant nominee for ascertaining contemporary associations. One Jane Austen Society of Pakistan fellow similarly indicated in an interview that understanding Jane Austen had empowered affiliates of their society to distinguish and govern their private lives in a better way.

7. Conclusion

It is carelessness not to consider that the social outcome of two centuries of colonialism is indubitable. It is conceivable that the preferences to the west, which were installed in the colonial ruling, are currently spread through machinery, social means, and apps. However, the 200-year-old culture which Austen pertinently portrays exposed such influence in modern Pakistan strengthens an imperialist account.

With all of the astonishing associations between Austen’s England and current Pakistan, it is thoughtless not to recognize the narration which is in enormous amount accountable for the resemblances. Afore acquiring its liberation in 1947, Pakistan was a geographical and political part of the United Kingdom’s Indian land for eons. Subsequently after two centuries of rule, Britain disseminated its system to Pakistan. Nevertheless, what is so inspiring and significant is that as the European ethics are entrenched into Pakistani society, they assisted the womenfolk of the Jane Austen Society of Pakistan to narrate Austen’s stories in such a manner that they are enabled to clasp any chance for emancipation. One representative articulates:

“What resonates with us is that she taught us how to navigate the world... She said, it’s OK; it’s OK; you have constraints. But then she teaches you how to remain in the system and yet do something for yourself.” (“Austenistan”, *Rough Translation*).

In this paper, we have examined comprehensive social networks of characters,

extracted from numerous works of the 19th century novels by Austen. This allows us to apply methodologies from social network investigation, such as society recognition. Through evaluating the results in association with literary scholars, we uncover that the configuration of the character networks can expose basic structural aspects in a novel, predominantly in relation to plot and character portrayal.

We may learn about Austen's society to explore the multiplicity in the communities returned and the insights which they grant. The study may facilitate us to see and study micro-plots or anecdotes in the novels. Moreover, we can strive to examine a number of overlapping characters and discover protagonists to be members of the most communities. We can arrange to widen our study to embrace novels by other authors, covering diverse time periods and dissimilar genres, in order to consider more composite literary hypotheses. Furthermore, we recommend that our thoroughly broad approach to the creation of comprehensive social networks provides insights into the construction of the novel that are elided when the focus is exclusively on the central characters.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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