



**Eximia Journal**  
**(ISSN 2784-0735)**

**Vol. 13**  

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**2024**

## Self-Actualization and Identity: A Feminist Reading of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*

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**Abstract.** One of the major works within feminism is the novel *Jane Eyre* written by Charlotte Bronte in 1847. *Jane Eyre* is claimed as one of the greatest and most popular works of English fiction. It is one of the most read, appreciated and discussed pieces of literature of the western world. *Jane Eyre* is a novel that narrates the story of protagonist's growth and internal development on her search for a meaningful existence in the society. The purpose of this study is to examine self-actualization and identity in Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre*. This research shows the women's status in the era of Patriarchal England of nineteenth century where they were living under men's control and they were discriminated in a patriarchal society. This study analyzes Jane's personal journey and her quest for independence, equality, self-esteem and identity viewed from a feminist perspective. This research paper also presents the social class issues and gender prejudices on women oppressions in maintaining the socio-economic independence and building an identity and equality through self-actualization of the protagonist Jane. This research applies the feminist literary criticism and Marxist feminism approaches to demonstrate the patriarchal and gender barriers that women had to cross over in order to achieve their identity, independence and equality in the society. Secondly, it reflects the patriarchal traits and gender codes along with class oppression that oppressed most women considering them as dependent and object of men. Finally, it represents women struggle breaking the social codes and values to finally reach her autonomy, building self-identity. This research is helpful in conveying different ways through which women can overcome oppressive and sexist societal norms and make themselves heard by participating in social issues and challenging patriarchal (male-dominated) society full of biasness in order to achieve social-independence, equality and build an identity.

**Keywords.** Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, Self-Actualization, Identity, Feminist Literary Criticism, Marxist Feminism

### Introduction

Charlotte Bronte (born April 21, 1816, Thornton, Yorkshire, England- died March 31, 1855, Haworth, Yorkshire) was an English novelist and poet, the eldest of the three Bronte sisters who survived into adulthood and whose novels became classics of English literature. She is best known for her novel *Jane Eyre*, an autobiographical novel which she published under the androgynous name Currer Bell in London on October 16, 1847. *Jane Eyre* went on to become a success in publication, and is widely held high in regard of literature. Charlotte was

noted for *Jane Eyre* (1847), a strong narrative of a woman in conflict with her natural desires and social condition. The novel gave new truthfulness to Victorian fiction.

*Jane Eyre* is a novel that narrates the story of a protagonist “Jane”, a seemingly plain and simple girl as she battles through life’s struggles, who also seeks for her personal growth and internal development on her search for a meaningful existence in the society. The story is set in England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The story focuses on a ten years old young girl, Jane, who after losing her both parents to typhoid, is then sent away to live with her cruel aunt, Mrs. Reed at Gateshead Hall at her dying Uncle’s last request. Once there, she is emotionally and physically abused by members of her family. Not long after living with her cruel family, Jane is sent to Lowood School, a boarding school for girls, where the headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, is also cruel towards her. The conditions at the school are terrible, and many children, and even Jane’s best friend, Helen Burns, die due to illness. After her unhappy childhood at Lowood School, where she was also beaten and abused, Jane, now a young adult decides to stay at the Lowood School as a teacher. Soon she decides to find a new career path as a governess due to her boredom at the school. This decision changes Jane’s life completely when her application is accepted at Thornfield Hall to look after a young French girl named Adele Varens. It is here that she meets her employer, with whom she begins to fall in love with, Mr. Edward Rochester, a mysterious man who has a dark secret, his marriage to Bertha. She runs away after learning the truth about Rochester’s marriage, becoming homeless and then sick. The Rivers family takes her in and nurses her back to health. She inherits her uncle’s wealth and estate. She finds out that the family who took her in is actually her cousins. St. John Rivers asks Jane to join him in his missionary work abroad and be his wife. She nearly accepts, but when she hears Rochester’s calling her in a dream, she decides not to marry someone she doesn’t love. She returns to Thornfield, and discovers Rochester’s house is burnt down and he is now living at Ferndean, his usual retreat, and is blind. However, Jane overcomes all the obstacles in her life through her determination, sharp wit and courage. The novel ends with Jane being married to Rochester with a son of their own and they enjoy perfect equality in their life together. Rochester also regains his sight in one eye.

### Literature Review

The famous work *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte had a great influence upon the society at that time, when it was first published in 1847. Numerous readers favoured the image of Jane Eyre very much for a long time. *Jane Eyre* is the first and also the most powerful and popular novel to represent the women’s position in society. Since its publication, many researchers have reviewed it from different perspectives.

Leni Irmawati’s *Self- Actualization in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre* (1847) applies humanistic psychology theory focusing on the hierarchy of needs to analyze the major character to reach self-actualization. *Jane Eyre’s Quest for Truth and Identity* (1999) by Christina J. Inge reflects the contradictory nature of Victorian society, a society that was in transition and one in which people were forced to discover new ways of finding and defining identity through feminism perspective. Likewise, *Becoming Jane: Identity, Dependency and Autonomy in Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre* (2013) by Annimaria Tiainen discusses on *Jane Eyre*’s journey to finding one’s identity and the balance between dependency and autonomy. Karen Swallow Prior on *Jane Eyre and the Invention of the Self* (2016) introduces the idea of “the self”, the fairly modern concept of the independent “individual” on *Jane Eyre*. Similarly, *Self-Actualization in Jane Eyre’s Main Character: A Feminism Study* (2022) by Lin Jin study examines Jane Eyre’s utterances and actions to uncover her personality traits in the novel Jane

Eyre, to analyze her inner feminist thinking. Whereas, *I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: The Quest to True Self in Jane Eyre*” (2024) by Tebok Kai and Lyra Goga presents a new way of being feminine and a woman to find the strength and will to go against everything society has set for her.

In her *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte represents the patriarchal high society which oppresses women. This oppression is based on the biological differences between men and women, and stems from the social class status of the characters in the novel. In fact, Charlotte Bronte has been unique and original in her writing because she treated issues which are women oppression, the breaking of the traditional gender roles and the issues of social classes, all of which she used to suffer from. She represents woman’s situation by her protagonist Jane, who struggles for her rights alone without male’s help and establishes her own identity through her self-actualization. Hence, this study aims at highlighting the ways in which female characters of *Jane Eyre* were oppressed in a patriarchal society. Living in the domination of patriarchal society and having an unequal treatment for a long time make women conscious of her position. Women try to gain equality of their position by voicing their willingness. It also shows that the female characters of *Jane Eyre* can manage to make themselves heard and influential by participating in an active discussion about women’s position and female rights and challenging male’s authority in the society to gain equality and above all identity. The present study serves to answer the following questions:

1. How does Bronte present her heroine’s struggle to establish her identity, independence and equality in the society?
2. How does Jane self-actualize for her true identification?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper work is based on a feminist perspective. In terms of methodology, the Feminist literary Criticism and Marxist Feminism approaches are used to examine self-actualization and identity and patriarchal traits too.

#### **Feminist Literary Criticism and Marxist Feminism:**

It is feminist criticism that criticizes the position of men and women in society. Henderson and Brown (1997) stated that feminist criticism is a critique of feminist whose aim is not simply to interpret the phenomena happening in society but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read. Feminist criticism is mainly used to analyze literary works focusing on inequality between men and women living in a society that gives men special portion in it called ‘patriarchy’.

For feminists, it is living in a patriarchal society that leads to inequalities for women since this society adopted male dominant power. As what Murfin and Ray (2003) have stated, the domination of men over women results in the position of men which is higher than women’s. This condition makes women as the second class in society suffering subordination and oppression given by men. Concerning to this unjust condition, women begin to react by forming their own movement or feminism to reject it.

There are various definitions about feminism. Feminism is a response to women oppression and suffering in a male-dominated society. Feminist tries to redefine society in a more justifiable way. They seek for equality between men and women in the society. Porter defined “feminism as perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer from because of their sex” (Beasley 207). Likewise, in the Penguin Dictionary (1988), says, “feminism is a doctrine suggesting that women are

systematically disadvantageous in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for men and women”. Based on the above given definition, both sources have the same point that the social system is unjust since it puts women in an unequal position to men. Women are the object suffering discrimination, oppression, subordination, and unequal opportunities in male-dominated society. As a result, this condition leads to feminist movement.

Generally, as a movement, feminism develops from time to time and can be classified into three phases, the first wave, second wave, and third wave. According to Castle (2007), the first phase or “wave” of feminism was concerned primarily with the issue of suffrage (the right to vote). The first wave started at mid-nineteenth until twentieth century. A second wave of feminism, in the 1960s, focused its attention on civil rights, specifically social and economic equality. The third wave was the continuant of the second wave mission on the diversity of women issues and much focused on the race, gender, and sexual issues.

The first wave of feminism began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States. It was primarily concerned with the issue of suffrage i.e. the right to vote (Castle 94). During this time, the differences between men and women were an especial concern, and many feminists felt that due to women’s moral superiority over men, women would bring much-needed purity to the world of politics. This early stage of movement was dominated by feminists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and continued to 90’s. “Second wave feminism was concerned with civil rights, specifically on social and economical equality” (Castle 95). It stressed on equal pay for equal work, equal career and educational opportunities. The movement was also concerned with the issues such as family planning, woman’s role as wife and mother, abortion, child-care, rape in marriage, domestic violence, social welfare, divorce and women oppressed. Feminists saw that oppression toward women as the man’s responsibility as the result of men dominated society. The feminist activists Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar were familiar in this stage of movement.

The third phase of feminism began in the mid 90’s and was formed with post-colonial and post-modern thinking. The third wave feminism is characterized by an interest of various groups of women of colour, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered women, and low income women. Third wave feminists often criticize second wave feminism for either excluding or overlooking these disempowered groups. In this phase, many constructs have been destabilized; including the notions of “universal womanhood”, body, gender, sexuality. The third wave have stepped onto the stage as strong and empowered and defining feminine beauty for themselves as subjects, not as objects of a sexist patriarchy (Rampton 2008).

According to Rosemarie Putnam Tong (2009), the variety of feminist thoughts is divided into eight types. The first type is liberal feminism; it focuses on gaining equality between men and women in all domains (work, home, sexuality, law). Liberal feminists argue that women should receive all privileges given to men and those biological differences between men and women do not justify inequality. The second type of feminism is radical feminism. This type of feminism emphasizes on the role of men oppression and violence toward women in the creation and maintenance of gender inequality and that patriarchy is the root cause of inequality between men and women. The third is Marxist and socialist feminism. Marxist and socialist feminists believe that women are oppressed, and attribute the oppression to the capitalist/private property system. Thus, they insist that the only way to end the oppression is to overthrow the capitalist system. Then the fourth type of feminism is psychoanalytic feminism. This type of feminism uses psychoanalysis theories to explain the oppression of women, with the belief that solutions can be found by investigating the causes of men’s

domination of women in men and women's psyches, focusing on early childhood development. The fifth is care-focused feminism. Care-focused feminism is mainly based on how women are only seen as care giver to the children and family. They become just a caregiver rather than a mother who works a full-time job as a teacher, accountant, nurse, etc. The sixth type is called multicultural, global, post-colonial feminism. It concerns on women's diversity and acknowledging the challenges it presents. Multicultural, global, postcolonial feminist disavows female chauvinism, the tendency of some women, particularly privileged women, to speak on behalf of all women, including women regarded as "other" than her (Tong, 2009). The seventh type of feminism is eco-feminism. Eco-feminism argues against patriarchal tendencies to destroy the environment, animals, and natural resources. It focuses on efforts to stop plundering of Earth's resources often drawing parallels between exploitation of women and exploitation of the Earth. Finally, the last type of feminism is post-modern and third-wave feminism. Postmodern feminists reject any mode of feminist thought that aims to provide a single explanation for why women are oppressed. Postmodern feminists invite each woman who reflects on their writings to become the kind of feminist she wants to be. Thus, there is no single formula for being a "good feminist".

From the above explained types of feminism, it is quite clear that all feminists have the same goal since they face different problems depending on the era they lived. They focused on unjust treatment, sufferings, and women's oppression as the result of men's domination in society.

Likewise, Marxist Feminism is a combination of two broad theories: "Marxist" and "Feminism". Marxist feminism is a branch of feminism which focuses on women's position as a worker or a member of lower class in a social class and concerns on gender inequality in capitalism.

Marxist Feminism literary theory considers both gender, and class to be components of literary analysis. As stated by Maggie Humm, the aim behind Feminist Marxism is to describe the material basis of women's subjugation, the relationship between the modes of production and women's status and also, to apply theories of women and class to the role of the family (7-8).

Marxist Feminism mainly originates from Karl Marx's beliefs, during the women's liberation movement, which are centered less on the material aspects of life than on the social ones. Feminist Marxists state that women's oppression in the social and economic context arises out from economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women. They believe that the fundamental conflict is between classes and that the issues of gender roles are part of that struggle. This idea was generalized by Engels (1884) in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* in which he argues that women's empowerment is bound up with the struggle against capitalism because women oppression serves the interests of the ruling class.

Feminist Marxists see women especially "housewives" as vital to capitalism, because their unpaid work in the home maintains masters and future bosses. If a woman works for her family in the home, she has to be supported, and so she is economically dependent on the man of the house, like her children. If she works outside the home, she is still expected to fulfill her domestic duties, and so she ends up working twice as hard as a man, and usually for a lot less pay. Engels argued that marriage is a social institution that has nothing to do with love and everything to do with private property. He writes that if women are to be truly emancipated from men, they must be economically independent. Thus, they can build their own identity by self-actualizing their independence from home and family.

Feminist Marxists focus on the concerns of working women. They relate the institution of family to capitalism; and basically on how women are considered to be victims of their families as the main source for their oppression. Feminist Marxists are more interested in making links with women in the labor movement and work on issues such as welfare rights. Feminist Marxists see every element of a social whole as an effect of production. Hence, “women’s oppression is necessarily either invisible or inevitable: it must either be reduced to its “truth” as a reflection of class quite material and real, as correlated with but not implied by the relations of production” ( Patricia 75).

Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* is the representation of women’s suffering where the main character Jane tries to seek out for her identity in a patriarchy society challenging every hurdles and difficulties she suffers during the quest for her search of identity through her self-actualization to bring gender equality between the positions to men for women. This perspective can be analyzed in the novel only with the help of literary theory of feminist criticism. Here, the feminist criticism is used to examine patriarchal traits and also used to examine female identity in the novel.

In the novel, *Jane Eyre*, Feminist Marxism is relevant to the plot and to the meaning of all what Jane overcame in her life to achieve her socio-economic status to gain independence and maintain equality in position to men in building up her own identity. Jane does not live an easy life but was deeply hindered by her “masters”. Jane stands up for herself, and resists attaining her financial independence in order to self-actualize for her own identification. Through her challenge to the established patriarchal rules of class and gender roles, she progresses from a marginalized orphan to an independent wealthy woman establishing her own identity. Even in her relationship with Mr. Rochester, she always tries not to be dependent on him. She often argues with Mr. Rochester in order to deliver her opinion and will. It can be shown in the following quotation:

I drew out my purse; a meager thing it was. “Five shillings, sir.” He took the purse, poured the hoard into his palm and chuckled over it as if its scantiness pleases him. Soon he produced his pocket-book: “Here”, said he, offering me a note: it was fifty pounds, and he owned me but fifteen. I told him I had no change. “I don’t want the change: you know that, take your wages (Bronte 242).

It shows that Jane does not want to depend on Mr. Rochester. She tries to refuse all the things which are given to her freely. She believes that one should self-actualize own potentiality to discover the differentiation she is receiving from the people and the society. She even attempts to defend her principle in order to maintain the equality between the positions to men for women so that she can instead build her own identification through independence with socio-economic stability.

To conclude with, it can be said that the ideas and conditions of the Patriarchal society influenced Bronte’s successful achievements for the women question through her literary works, *Jane Eyre*.

*Jane Eyre* as a literary work strongly focuses on female’s revolution against the traditional view of patriarchal society and women. It is the most suitable form to describe women’s struggle in search of identity and self-actualization for independence, selfhood and gender equality. Feminist literary criticism is applied with reference for the search of identity through self-actualization to bring gender equality whereas Marxist Feminism is upgraded for the upliftment of women place through independence in social strata.

## 1. Historical and Literary Background

### 1.1. Patriarchy in England in Nineteenth Century

Over years, society has been dominated, conducted and controlled through men's domination under patriarchal system in which men have more power than women have. In patriarchal system, men's domination exists in domestic and social life. On the other hand, in patriarchal system, women are considered to be more inferior to men in all aspects of life, such as in education, politics, economy, and social life. The example of inferiority of women in patriarchal system is represented by the women of England in which they should be in the lower position than men.

The fact that men have the control over women was shown in Britain in the nineteenth century. Women in that era were insisted to do the entire household chores and take care of the children and the husband. Women also got less chance and rights in education, politics, and social life (Lambert, 2009). The most common problems faced by women at that time were discrimination and oppression. These problems were mostly related to the social issues as the effect of patriarchal system, which created the discrimination in work places, education fields, political fields and domestic areas. One of the characteristics of patriarchal system is oppression towards women. This is the results of men's dominated power in society that they believe it is their fate to be in the higher position than women's. Murfin and Ray added that men have "qualities such as light, reason, and activity whereas femininity recalls passivity and emotion" that makes the superiority of men obvious (158).

The England that is portrayed in *Jane Eyre* reveals the social conventions of the society. There was a clear hierarchical structure within society and class distinctions were present in everyday life (Pool 46). The distinction, title and rank were of great importance during this period of time (Williams 175).

In England, there were three layers of social class: upper class, middle class, and lower class. This classism happens in capitalist society. The hierarchy was based on their social and economical background. Upper class was the richest people whose wealth came from inherited land or investments. The members of this class were also people from church and nobility. The members of middle class consisted of bankers, shopkeepers, merchants, engineers, and other professionals, while the members of lower class were physical laborers (Chancer and Watkins 81). During this century, social position was of great importance, and the conventions of society were to be strictly followed. According to the social conventions of this time, men and women were evaluated; there were certain standards to abide by in order to be seen as a person of a certain class (Cannadine 20).

Living in the domination of patriarchal society and having an unequal treatment for a long time make women conscious and self-actualize of her position and identity. Therefore, women try to gain equality of their position and identity by voicing their willingness. Women's voice against inferiority to get the same position and identity as men in society is called feminism. Feminism often happens in patriarchal society. Suffering from the inequality and imbalance relationship in households, women started the movement of feminism. The main focus of the movement is to gain equality along with the identity and equal position, such as in rights, education, etc. The feminists were not only about protesting and demonstrating to the society about their sufferings, but also in the forms of literary works.

Mary Daly, a radical feminist, was convinced that "there is nothing good in this notion for women to pursue". She asserted patriarchy has constructed both the positive feminine qualities of nurturance, compassion, and gentleness and the negative feminine qualities of pettiness, jealousy, and vanity. Thus, she concluded, women should reject the seemingly "good"

aspects of femininity as well as the obviously “bad” ones. They are all “man-made constructs” shaped for the purpose of trapping women deep in the prison of patriarchy (Tong 2009). Kate Millet (in Tong 2009) added that intimidation is everywhere in patriarchy. The streetwise woman realizes that if she wants to survive in patriarchy, she had better act feminine, or else she may be subjected to “a variety of cruelties and barbarities”.

Literary works tell the reader about the reflection of the reality in a certain society. It sometimes contains feelings, opinions or critiques of the authors. The authors usually deliver their opinions through his or her works since they cannot speak directly to the subject. Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* is one of the many works concerning women issues in nineteenth century. Jane acts differently from other women and she is diligent and an independent hard worker. She is the model of woman’s struggle in England surviving the hard life. Bronte illustrates the woman’s problems in *Jane Eyre* by showing how the main female character faces many problems as the result of not obeying the system she doesn’t fit in since it is unfair. She is seeking for her identity through her self-actualization for gender equality and independence in the society.

### 1.2. Gender Roles

Murfin and Ray define the term ‘gender’ “referring to the socially constructed identities *man, woman, masculine, and feminine*” (182). Gender roles are the behavior that society demand based on sexuality which influences rights and relationships between men and women. Gender is commonly linked to social interpretation of reproductive biological distinctions giving stereotypes to women.

Throughout the novel, it is apparent that men are superior to women and it is portrayed in many ways. For example, when Jane is a child at Gateshead, she has an outburst in which she speaks up and tells Mrs. Reed what she thinks of her. This is rather unrealistic behavior for a patriarchal child, as they were never supposed to be capable of such extraordinarily self-assertive acts. With regard to gender, Jane’s outburst is intended to remind Mrs. Reed that “she, too, is surrounded by patriarchal limits” (Gilbert and Gubar 343). She does this by asking her what her uncle, Mr. Reed, would have said to her if he were alive (Bronte 22). “My Uncle Reed is in heaven, and he can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma: they know how you shut me up all day long and how you wish me dead” (Bronte 23). The statement demonstrates that Jane is extraordinarily self-assertive and is standing up to her, but she uses a man to do so. The uncle is mentioned to make Mrs. Reed remember her place as the inferior, in case she had forgotten during her time as a ‘substitute patriarch’. This term is used by Gilbert and Gubar when referring to Mrs. Reed, as she appears to hold the position of power in the family by replacing her husband after he passed away (Gilbert and Gubar 342). Thus, even though Jane shows her real courage and tries to appear powerful, she still uses the power of a man to endorse and increase her own almost non-existent power, not only as a female but also as a female child. In reality, Mrs. Reed is not the only one who holds a position typically held by men. She is, indeed, a surrogate patriarch as the head of the family, as there is no longer a man to take this responsibility until John Reed was old enough. Other examples of women functioning as male surrogates include Miss Temple at Lowood Institution who is taking care of the girls and running the institution when Mr. Brocklehurst is absent most of the time. Jane initially believes that Mrs. Fairfax owns Thornhill; until she learns that she is only the housekeeper looking after the estate when Mr. Rochester is away, travelling on social calls or conducting business. This means that even though it may seem as though a number of women hold positions of power in the novel, but in reality they are merely substituting for men (348).

Gender is controlled and constructed by the cultural and social influences in society. Thus, stereotypes and prejudices are often important when discussing the notion of gender. An

example of a stereotypical view of the male and female gender is that women must be beautiful and men must have money. This is clearly also the case in the novel, as the women's most important quality is their beauty, and the men are judged according to their fortune. Men select the women and arrange the marriages- Mr. Rochester's father and Bertha Manson's father arrange their marriage, even though they barely know each other. Often, the women do not have much to say but, in this case, Mr. Rochester is unaware of Bertha's secret characteristics and of the set up. Another example that demonstrates how society defines the genders with stereotypical traits is found in the quote: "And for the rest, though you have a man's vigorous brain, you have a woman's heart, and – it would not do" (Bronte 348). Butler's theory on performative gender explains how we act our gender. Our behaviours and actions define our gender. This is again related to the stereotypes prejudices and what society defines as feminine and masculine. An example of this in the novel is the stereotype that men are tough and independent and women are soft and dependent. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane does not conform to this stereotype. She is stubborn, tough, passionate, and independent, determined and has a temper. "But I apprised you that I was a hard man", said he; 'difficult to persuade.' 'And I am a hard woman, - impossible to put off' (Bronte 327). In this quote, Jane and St. John quarrel and they are both stubborn and hard – Jane even more so than St. John. She does not act as society expects her to. Another example of this is demonstrated when Jane does not play the role that Mr. Rochester expects when she discovers the truth about Bertha. He expects her to be the soft and dependent woman who will grieve and cry on his shoulder so that he can be the one to comfort her, but she does not do this at all (254). The lady in the village shop judges Jane according to her appearance and manner. She assumes that she is of higher social class – a fine, wealthy lady – due to her behavior and the way she is dressed, which perfectly demonstrates the way in which society assumes your gender and your social class based on your appearance and manner. They judge you according to these assumptions and expect you to act accordingly.

### **1.3. Oppressions**

Oppression can be defined as "systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another for whatever reason" (Barone 7). Oppression is relational between oppressor and oppressed, mistreater and victim, dominant and subordinate. According to Barone, oppression manifests prejudice (attitudes, stereotypes, and behavior), discrimination (power), and institutionalized oppression (control and social reproduction) (Barone 8).

Juliet Mitchell and Alison Jaggar are socialist feminists who believe in two-system explanations of women's oppression as a combination of Marxist feminist account of class power with a radical feminist account of sex power. This explanation claims that the roots of women's oppression are capitalism and patriarchy. Mitchell states that women's status and function are multiply determined by their role in not only production (capitalism) but also reproduction (patriarchy), while Jaggar states that capitalism oppresses women as workers, but patriarchy oppresses women as women, an oppression that affects women's identity as well as activity. Further, Mitchell and Jaggar imply that patriarchy, not capitalism, may be women's ultimate worst enemy since capitalism exists inside patriarchy (111).

#### **1.3.1. Patriarchal Oppression**

Oppression is one of the big problems faced by feminists and women in patriarchal system. Kate Millet, a radical feminist, insisted that the roots of women's oppression are buried deep in patriarchy's sex or gender system (in Tong 2009). It is said that patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate, weak characteristics.

### 1.3.2. Class Oppression

Class privilege is the basis of one person or group claiming to be more important, smarter, better, more deserving, more qualified than another person or group. The lower group is viewed as less intelligent, less talented, inferior, and not worth very much. The importance of class issues is that it focuses exclusively on the poor, which are the members of lower group (Barone 13). Members of oppressed groups are emotionally, physically, and spiritually abused until they begin to believe that oppression is there in life that is somehow deserved, natural, right, or conversely, that it does not exist (Barone 25).

### 1.4. Identity

Identity is a multidimensional and indefinite concept that has at least touched upon in a variety of human sciences, most notably perhaps in philosophy, psychology, social psychology and other social sciences, as well as cultural studies. The definition of identity in Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary is simply "your identity is who you are" or "the identity of a person or place is the characteristics they have that distinguish them from others" (718). The idea that identity consists of characteristics that distinguish the individual from other individuals is clearly stated in the dictionary's definition. The definition can be seen as the references for the 'Self' for 'identity' and 'other' for 'self-actualization in generalizing the concept of Jane's identity in the novel *Jane Eyre*.

In addition to examining the concept of identity in general, one can also specify the kind of identity one is studying. Depending on the discipline and subjective emphasis there can be found many kinds of "specified" identities: personal and social identity, national, cultural and ethnic identity, religious and group identity, online identity, gender identity, occupational identity, and so on. All of these "specified" identities together can be regarded as contributing to the individual's sense of self – sense of the "whole" identity, which can also be seen in Jane's generalization of self-actualization for identity. The kind of identity examined in this research, will mostly be personal identity mixed with social and gender aspects. Jane's identity analysis for the social position of women in the patriarchal society plays an essential role in Jane's identity formation in addition to her personal development.

The questions of the self and its formation are essential in human development. As Hall (2000) notes, the concept of identity has been widely studied in different disciplinary fields in recent years, for example in philosophy, psychoanalytically influenced feminism, cultural criticism and postmodernism. What is common in these fields is that all of them seem to be "critical of the notion of an integral, originary and unified identity (15)."

Bhabha (2000) seems to be arguing against the same and unified nature of identity when stating that identity is never "a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (99-100).

Butler (1999) emphasizes the importance of gender and other social categories and functions through which the person's identity "assumes social visibility and meaning", and states that identity cannot be studied in isolation from the notion of gender and other social notions (22-23). Bordieu (2000) acknowledges the importance of the process of nomination in relation to identity, and sees the proper name as a way to institute "a constant and durable social identity" (299). However, the question whether identity is by nature stable and unified or unstable and fragmented seems to be highly controversial among researchers and theorists, and the options vary across different disciplines as well.

The social, in addition to the personal, seems to be an integral component of the notion of identity for many theorists. Burke and Stets (2009) argue that in the concept of identity, the individual and society are connected. They define identity as "the set of meanings that define

who one is when one is occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person”, and because people act in many roles, are members of many different groups and have many kinds of personal characteristics, they also have multiple identities (3). Cast (2003) notes that social structure organizes the self and that “the self is a process that both shapes and is shaped by interaction...” (41) People use their role-based identities in interaction with other people in counter-roles. Sets (2006) describes role identities as consisting of all the meanings – both personal and socially derived – that a person attaches to himself, and sees the self and society as reflecting each other in their complexity and differentiation (88-89). To sum up, it seems that the social context, interaction, roles, and the idea of multiplicity are important in relation to the concept of identity. Arguably, in Jane’s identity one can see how the personal and social are intertwined: both her personal psychological processes of ‘Self-actualization’ and ‘identity’ and social position as a patriarchal female who intends for independence and gender equality contribute substantially to her identity.

## **2. Women Oppression in *Jane Eyre***

Charlotte Bronte was a profane writer of her time who portrayed the painful life of the females under patriarchal institutions within the patriarchal society. It is important to see how Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* reflects the condition of women in the society in the nineteenth century of England in which patriarchy and capitalism exist.

Oppression is one of the big problems faced by feminists and women in patriarchal system. Oppression is a type of injustice. It is an unbalanced use of authority, law, or physical force to prevent others from being free or equal. In this case, Jane, as the main female character, can be seen as the representative of the women who suffered from oppressions during the time when patriarchy was common.

Generally, there are two kinds of oppression suffered by Jane: patriarchal oppression and class oppression.

### **2.1. Patriarchal Oppression**

Oppression happens since women are in a second place to men. It is patriarchal society which puts women in such condition. It makes stereotypes about women. This society considers women weaker than men. This stereotype makes an assumption that women cannot do what men can do. There are men’s job and women’s job. Women’s jobs are in domestic areas such as taking care of children, cleaning the house, and doing other domestic job, while men’s jobs are as breadwinners. Women are considered incapable of doing men’s job. Feminists reject the idea saying that work like the ability to care for babies, clean the house and cook are natural feminine jobs. The differentiation given by the society in terms of job distribution oppresses women psychologically since they are considered incapable.

#### **(i) Considered as a Dependent Woman**

Jane, the main female character in Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* also suffers from the different treatment in term of financial independence. Jane’s uncle, John Eyre, considers her dependent financially because she was left by her parents and he thinks that she cannot do a job that supports her life:

As we re-entered the carriage, and I sat back feverish and fagged, I remembered what, in the hurry of events, dark and bright, I had wholly forgotten- the letter of my uncle, John Eyre, to Mrs. Reed: his intention to adopt me and make me his legatee. ‘It would be, a relief’, I thought, if I had ever so small an independency (Bronte 248).

Jane is an orphan left by her parents in her childhood. She is adopted by her uncle, Mr. Reed. He loves Jane as he loves his own children. As soon he died, Jane is raised by his wife, Mrs. Reed. She does not love Jane as her husband did, and she treats her bad.

In this scene, Jane is told that she still has a relative besides Mrs. Reed and her children. One day, Mrs. Reed gives Jane a letter from her father's brother, John Eyre. He intends to adopt Jane and brings her to Madeira with him, but Mrs. Reed tells him that she has died. He wants to adopt Jane in order to make her his heiress. By this letter, it can be said that Jane is considered by her uncle that she is financially dependent, and being her uncle's heiress will give her a small financial independence.

Another example showing Jane's dependency is shown as follows: '...but till then, allow me to stay here: I dread another essay of the horrors of homeless destitution' (Bronte 320).

In her youth and again as a governess, Jane must depend on others for support. In the first stage of her life, at Gateshead, Jane is dependent as an orphan living with her aunt and is supported by her. Living at Lowood as a pupil and a teacher makes her life to be supported by Lowood. Then in the next stage of her life in Thornfield as a governess, she is homeless and is supported by Mr. Rochester as her master. The last, in the Rivers' Moor House, Jane is also financially dependent and homeless.

The previous quotation mentions that Jane begs to a person to let her stay for she does not have a house. It is Diana and Marry River, the people she begs to. Jane's dependency is seen when she begs them to let her stay in Moor House for she is homeless until she gets a job to support her life.

### **(ii) Being an Object of Men**

In nineteenth century of England, gender roles strongly influenced people's behavior and identities which made women realize their inferior position. Realizing that gender roles put women into subordination, Jane has her hard struggles to become independent and recognizes her personal qualities. She faces some men who do not respect women as their equals. Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester, and St. John attempt to command or control women. Since men mostly see women for their beauty and not from their characters, women are seen as entertainers for men and the object of them. Because of this status, women get less respect from men. Men also hold no respect for their wives by having mistresses. Many men keep mistresses and in the end still expect their wives to be faithful even though they are cheating on them the whole time. It is a hypocritical aspect of the patriarchal society of the nineteenth century of England.

In the case of Jane Eyre, she becomes the object of her master, Mr. Rochester; Rochester feels that she is a good woman for him because Jane is smart and loyal. He gives attentions to her more than a master should give to his worker. As a result, Jane falls in love with him:

If all these people came in a body and spat at me, what would you do Jane?

'Turn them out of the room, sir, if I could.'

He half smiled. 'But if I were to go to them and they only looked at me coldly, and whispered sneeringly amongst each other, and then dropped off and left me one by one, what then? Would you go with them?'

'I rather think not, sir: I should have more pleasure in staying with you.'

'To comfort me?'

'Yes, sir, to comfort you, as well as I could.'

'And if they laid you under a ban for adhering to me?'

‘I, probably, should know nothing about their ban; and if I did, I should care nothing about it.’

‘Then, you could dare censure for my sake?’

‘I could dare it for the sake of any friend who deserved my adherence; as you, I am sure, do’ (Bronte 190).

Jane’s loyalty to her master and Rochester’s comfort to Jane lead them to a situation where he falls in love with Jane, and in return she falls in love with him. As the love between the two grows, it is found out that Rochester is already married and cannot legally marry Jane, so he begs her to become her mistresses. In resisting her independence and pride, Jane shows a remarkable choice for a woman at that time by refusing to be a mistress and leaving Rochester. Her self-actualization resists her to do so.

In the middle of the novel, the main character finds herself in another dilemma when a man named St. John asks for her hand in marriage. She feels no love for this man and holds no passion to be wed to him. In the end, she refuses the intended engagement:

A part of me you must become, he answered steadily: ‘otherwise the whole bargain is void. How can I, a man yet thirty, take out with me to India a girl of nineteen, unless she be married to me? How can we be forever together –sometimes in solitudes, sometimes amidst savage tribes - and unwed?(Bronte 374)

Jane rejects St. John’s proposal to join him as a missionary’s wife, where she would be submitting herself to his will. St. John is austere and ambitious. He pressures her to reconsider, and she nearly gives in. However, she realizes that she cannot abandon forever the man she truly loves. Jane prefers accepting the duty of missionary without being his wife. It is because Jane feels that she does not love him and she does not want to be married by the person she does not love:

God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labor, not for love. A missionary’s wife you must – shall be mine: I claim you – not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service (Bronte 369).

A marriage to St. John would mean sacrificing passion for principle. When he invites her to come to India with him as a missionary, he offers her the chance to make a more meaningful contribution to society than she would as a housewife. It can be said that living with St. John would mean life without true love, and marrying St. John is a form of imprisonment since she is forced to keep her true feeling. Jane’s consideration of St. John’s proposal leads her to understand that a large part of one’s personal freedom is found in a relationship of mutual emotional independence. Jane’s inferior position as a governess and teacher serves simply to heighten her thirst for independence, both financial and emotional. She rejects marriages to both Mr. Rochester and St. John because she understands she will have to forfeit her independence in the unions, which ultimately turns out to lose her identity in unison.

## **2.2. Class Oppression:**

Besides patriarchal oppression, Jane also suffers from class oppression as an impact of living in capitalist society. Capitalism is structured on the basis of classism. The main basis of classism is the economic system. This kind of oppression happens since Jane is a member of middle class society.

### **(i) During Childhood**

Jane is an orphan since she was five years old. Her parents do not leave any property or money at all as a legacy. She is then adopted by her mother’s brother, Mr. Reed. Jane

experiences oppression since she is left by her parents. She suffers from class oppression in three stages of her life. In the first stage of her life, which is in the Gateshead, she receives class oppression from her aunt and cousins because of her status as a poor orphan. The Reeds consider her less than a servant. They are fully aware of Jane's inferiority, so they ridicule and abuse her:

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh o my bones shrank when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence, more frequently, however, behind her back (Bronte 15).

Jane lives with her aunt and cousins since she is left by her parents. They are her only relatives, but these people she lives with do not treat her like one of the family members. To them, she is an uninvited guest and a troublemaker. Jane is unjustly treated within the house; she is beaten by her cousin and neglected by her aunt. Jane as an orphan feels inferior to Mrs. Reed and her children:

You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. Now, I'll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows (Bronte 16).

### **(ii) During Teenage**

In the second stage of Jane's life, which takes place at Lowood, Jane experiences the next dramatic scene of classism. Lowood is a charity school which is maintained for female orphans. Jane becomes one of many oppressed girls under the rule of Mr. Brocklehurst, the hypocritical master of Lowood. Jane's early years at Lowood is a hard scene of her life since she endures harsh conditions, cruel teachers, and the tyranny of Mr. Brocklehurst:

I had got in hand a nauseous mess; burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it. The spoons were moved slowly: I saw each girl taste her food and try to swallow it; but in most case the effort was soon relinquished. Breakfast was over, and none had breakfast (Bronte 48).

Bronte uses hunger to reveal how people treat each other- who is charitable, and who is not. In this case, hunger symbolizes cruelty and a lack of nourishment. The lack of food at Lowood and bad treatment to the girls reveal the school's cruelty and religious hypocrisy of Mr. Brocklehurst. He treats the girls at Lowood badly for the reason of modesty. In fact, the starvation and poor condition of the school are in a sharp contrast to the luxurious and well-fed existence enjoyed by Brocklehurst's family.

Jane also gets a different treatment from the teachers in her school. They treat her more strictly than to other girls as the responds of what Mrs. Reed has told to Mr. Brocklehurst:

Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body to save her soul: if, indeed, such salvation be possible, for this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut – this girl – a liar!'... 'This I learned from her benefactress; from the pious and charitable lady who adopted her in her orphan state, reared her as her own daughter, and whose kindness, whose generosity the unhappy girl

repaid by an ingratitude so bad, so dreadful, that at last her excellent patroness was obliged to separate her from her own young ones, fearful lest her here to be healed, even as the Jews of old sent their diseased to the troubled pool of Bethesda; and, teachers, superintendent, I beg of you not to allow the waters to stagnate round her (Bronte 66-67).

Mrs. Reeds does not really care about Jane's heart. She reminds Mr. Brocklehurst that she is unpleasant and a liar and needs special watching at Lowood School, which is where he is going to take her. Jane is really upset that Mrs. Reed accuses her of being a liar in front of Mr. Brocklehurst, who is obviously someone important at Lowood. She can tell that Mrs. Reed is just making things harder for her at new school. As a result, Jane gets worst treatments.

### **(iii) During Adulthood**

Being a student for six years and a teacher for two years at Lowood, Jane wishes to have a better job to support her life and decides to prepare herself for a change. She advertises herself and is accepted in a position as a governess in a manor called Thornfield. This section marks the third phase of Jane's life, in which she begins her career as a governess. She finds that living in Thornfield is pleasant and comfortable since she is well accepted by Mr. Rochester, the master, and all the servants. Still, in this place, Jane suffers class oppression from her master's guests. One day, she is forced to join her master's party. Unfortunately, some of the party members treat her with disdain and cruelty:

No, you men never do consider economy and common sense. You should hear mama on the chapter of governesses: Mary and I have had, I should think, a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi – were they not, mama?. (Bronte 165)

In this scene, Jane suffers from class oppression from the higher class women in the form of insult. She is forced to sit in the drawing room during Rochester's party, and she must endure his guest's comments to her mother about her nature of governess. She says that half of governesses are detestable, ridiculous, and all incubi which mean that Jane is part of them. This insult continues in the next conversation:

Certainly, my best. And I was quiet right: depend on that: there are a thousand reasons why liaisons between governesses and tutors should never be tolerated a moment in any well-regulated house; firstly – 'Oh, gracious, mama! Spare us the enumeration! Au reste, we all know them: danger of bad example to innocence of childhood; distractions and consequent neglect of duty on the part of the attached – mutual alliance and reliance; confidence thence resulting - insolence accompanying - mutiny and general blowup. Am I right, Baroness Ingram, of Ingram Park?' (Bronte 166)

Blanche Ingram and her mother have a discussion about governess. She discusses loudly the entire silly and dreadful governess she has had. In England, having a governess is common. Governess is a woman who works for a wealthy family by being children's private tutors in both academics and etiquette. The position of governess in society is quiet ambiguous. She is not a servant, but she is not one of the family members as well. Consequently, she sometimes gets class oppression, such as having an insult of both her appearance and intelligence based on the assumption that she is a member of lower class.

### **3. Self- Actualization and Building Identity**

Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is one of the literary works showing woman's struggle for lives. Throughout the story, Jane as the main female character in the novel opposes the forces that prevent her from finding happiness: Mrs. Reed's unfair accusations, Rochester's attempt to make her his mistress, and St. John's desire to transform her into a missionary wife. By falling

in love with Rochester, she implicitly rebels against the dictates of class boundaries that limit her, as a governess, to be a lower status than her master. Besides rejecting traditional views of class, she also denigrates society's attempts to restrict women's activities. Women, she argues, need active pursuits and intellectual stimulation, just as men do, to build their own identity being truly an independent persona.

### **3.1. Being an Independent Women**

Jane is a representation of a character of an independent woman living in England. It is shown by how she struggles for her life. She was left by her parents in her childhood. She lives with her antagonistic aunt and cousins giving her bad treatments and she has no other relatives but them, so she has no choice except staying in that house. In the second phase of her life, which is at Lowood, Jane lives independently by being a teacher:

My world had for some years been in Lowood: my experience had been of its rules and systems; now I remembered that the real world was wide and that a varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements, awaited those who had courage to go forth into its expanse, to seek real knowledge of life amidst its perils (Bronte 83).

Jane is a student at the school for six years and then becomes a teacher there for two years. She is longing for freedom since she never goes out of the school, even for holidays, and she now dreams of liberty and a new page of her life. Another reason for her decision to go is that she is ready for a change. Also partly because Miss Temple gets married and leaves the school so, she advertises herself in the regional newspaper as an available tutor or governess. She believes education and having a career will allow her the freedom to improve her position in society by teaching her to act like a lady, and increases her self-confidence.

The above quotation mentions that Jane is independent in her way of thinking. Jane independently thinks about her own future since she has boredom living in the same circumstance in the last eight years and she now wants something new in her life.

In her new home, Jane faces a situation where she should show her independence:

I see no enemy to a fortunate issue but in the brow; and that brow professes to say – I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me so to do. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give." The forehead declares, "Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feeling burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision. Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire may pass by: but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience. (Bronte 187)

Being emotionally and financially independent, Jane now has a better life than she has before. Unfortunately, this condition is still not a complete one yet since Jane does not get her true love, which is Mr. Rochester. She has the same dreams for several nights about Mr. Rochester, so that she decides to pay a visit at Thornfield to get information about him. It is found that Thornfield was burnt and the residences move to Ferndean:

Which are none, sir, to me. I love you better now, when I can really be useful to you, than I did in your state of proud independence, when you disdained every part but that of the giver and protector. (Bronte 408)

Additionally, because Rochester has been blinded by the fire and has lost his manor house, he has become weaker while Jane has grown in strength- Jane is now financially independent and even more superior to her former master.

### **3.2. Breaking the Social Value that Women are only placed within Domestic Life**

Jane is not a type of women in her era. Jane is a model of an independent woman who struggles for and be the mastery of her own life in establishing her own identity. She serves as a governess and teacher in order to show her capability in conducting a career. She breaks the social value that women are only placed within domestic life:

I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere. Can I not get so much of my own will? Is not the thing feasible? Yes - yes - the end is not so difficult; if I had only a brain active enough to ferret out the means of attaining it. Bronte 84)

Jane has been six years in Lowood as a student; she works hard in making herself a good student. She then becomes a teacher in the same institution in two years. By being a teacher, Jane shows her quality as an independent woman conducting a career and feeding herself by her own efforts.

The next section marks the third phase of Jane's life, in which she advertises herself and begins her career as a governess and travels to Thornfield:

The promised of a smooth career, which my first claim introduction to Thornfield Hall seemed to pledge, was not belied on a longer acquaintance with the place and its inmates. Mrs. Fairfax turned out to be what she appeared, a placid-tempered, kind-natured woman, of competent education and average intelligence. My pupil was a lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged, and therefore was sometimes wayward; but as she was committed entirely to my care, and no injudicious interference from any quarter ever thwarted my plans for obedient and teachable. She had no great talents, no marked traits of character, no peculiar development of feeling or taste which raised her one inch above the ordinary level of childhood; but neither had she any deficiency or vice which sunk her below it. She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound, affection; and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society. (Bronte 104)

The quotation depicts the condition of the family in which she serves as governess. She is well accepted in Thornfield Hall, and she has a good pupil, named Adele, who is passionate in having lessons with Jane. Adele is a lively, spoiled child, but she is also obedient. Although Adele does not have great talents, but she is teachable and she makes a good progress.

That Jane teaches pupil above shows that women can conduct career to show women's capability and rejects the social assumption that women are incapable. One of the radical feminist's goals is to take women to the public world to make them independent so that they can build their own identity. By being a teacher and a governess, Jane breaks the women stereotype which defines women as domestic workers and regards them as weak and incapable.

### **3.3. Refusing to be an Object of Men**

In England, women were mostly seen from their beauty, and not from their characters. It simply was said that women acted as men's entertainer and the object of men. Because of this status, women got less respect from men. Men also hold no respect for their wives as they liked to have mistress, whereas men took the responsibilities for the women in family and marriage life. Men in the patriarchal society should be the provider and the protector who controlled everything that concerns women's life.

Jane is not the type of a woman in her era; she is strong and out spoken, and lives her life for herself and no one else. When she decides to marry a man, it would be caused by mutual affection, or better be single rather being a mistress because she knows that a life as a mistress is not a life for her:

Not in your sense of the word, but in mine you are scheming to destroy me. You have as good as said that I am a married man - as a married man you will shun me, keep out of my way: just now you have refused to kiss me. You intend to make yourself a complete stranger to me: to live under this roof only as Adele's governess; if ever I say a friendly word to you, if ever a friendly feeling inclines you again to me, you will say. - "That man had nearly made me his mistress: I must be ice and rock to him;" and ice and rock you will accordingly become.' 'I cleared and steadied my voice to reply: 'All is changed about me, sir; I must change too - there is no doubt of that; and to avoid fluctuations, there is only one way - Adele must have a new governess, sir. (Bronte 276)

Jane feels that living with Rochester as his mistress would mean the loss of her dignity. Ultimately, she would become degraded and dependent upon Rochester for love, while unprotected by any true marriage bond.

Jane also refuses the state where a man treats her like a lover, but this man is in a way of marrying another woman:

I tell you I must go! 'I retorted, roused to something like passion. 'Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? -a machine without feelings? And can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal - as we are! (Bronte 234)

The quotation shows how Mr. Rochester asks Jane to choose to stay at Thornfield with his bride or leave Thornfield for Ireland as a governess. Jane chooses leaving Thornfield since she thinks it is cruel to make her stay in the house and watch his marriage to someone else while she loves him. In this quotation, Jane shows her quality as a woman by leaving the man she loves rather than to be nothing to him which it means she refuses to be an object of men. This has been possible only due to her self-realization for her identity.

Jane will only enter into marriage with Mr. Rochester after she has gained a fortune and a family, and after she has been in the same level with him:

Reader, I married him. A quiet wedding we had: he and I, the parson and clerk, were alone present. When we got back from church, I went into the kitchen of the manor-house, where Mary was cooking the dinner and John cleaning the knives, and I said - 'Mary, I have been married to Mr. Rochester this morning. (Bronte 411)

According to Yahuei Wang in her journal entitled *Women, marriage, and Economy in "Jane Eyre"*, Jane's marriage is a kind of modern one since she marries for mutual affection to Mr. Rochester. By her marriage, she thus becomes a reflection of an ideal woman in her era shown by how she avoids being an object as a way to survive in a patriarchal society. Thus, she also builds her own position in the so called patriarchy society in terms of marriage.

### **3.4. Struggling to Survive by Showing Her Resistance**

Stereotype exists in every aspect of life, including in Jane's life. A woman is recognized as weak, submissive, emotional, dependent, indecisive, while a man is strong, aggressive, rational, independent, and decisive. Jane refuses to be a woman in those stereotypes since she faces a hard life, so struggling for life is the best way to get the better one to identify oneself.

As an orphan since she was young, Jane did not have a chance to be weak and dependent as a woman. She has to be strong enough in struggling against subordinations in her life: Mrs. Reed's cruelty and Mr. Brocklehurst's hypocrisy.

The following is one example of her aunt's cruelty:

How dare you affirm that, Jane Eyre?

How dare I, Mrs. Reed? How dare I? Because it is the truth. You think I have no feelings and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity. I shall remember how you thrust me back - roughly and violently thrust me back - into the red room, and locked me up there, to my dying day; though I was in agony; though I cried out, while suffocating with distress, "Have mercy! Have mercy, Aunt Reed!" And that punishment you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me - knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions, this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. You are deceitful! (Bronte 40)

This conversation happens in a condition where Mrs. Reed tells Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane is a bad, liar, and hard-hearted girl who needs a special treatment in her new school, Lowood. Being judged as not herself, Jane replies her aunt's statement right after Mr. Brocklehurst leaves Gateshead. Jane declares to Mrs. Reed that this violent action is an injustice and that she cannot live in this unloving environment. After showing her bravery claiming her aunt deceitful, Jane feels a sensation of freedom and triumph which means her emotional independence.

In this case, Jane feels a need to assert her identity through rebellion. By doing a little rebellion in Gateshead, Jane shows her resistance facing her aunt whom she considered as monster or evil. It is her first stage in struggling for life.

In the next stage of her life, Jane becomes a beggar as a consequence of leaving Thornfield after knowing that Mr. Rochester has a wife who is still alive. Jane brings fifty shillings which can only cost her travel and breads for two days:

I slept two nights in the open air, and wandered about two days without crossing a threshold: but twice in that space of time did I taste food; and it was when brought by hunger, exhaustion, and despair almost to the last gasp, that you, Mr. Rivers, forbade me to perish of want at your door, and took me under the shelter of your roof (Bronte 319).

Jane is penniless and dirty, and she has nothing but the clothes she is wearing. She begs food, and she sleeps in the open air for nights. Her pity condition shows her resistance facing a life she wants rather than being a mistress in Thornfield. 'I will be a dressmaker; I will be a plain workman; I will be a servant, a nurse-girl, if I can be no better,' I answered (Bronte 320).

Still in the same part of her life, Jane shows her quality as an independent woman struggling for her life. She is in a condition where she has nothing to live, even to eat. She has to feed herself by working as whatever she can, even as a servant in a restaurant. Jane questions the woman working at a store about job opportunities for women in the area, but there is not really anything available that she could do. She then keeps moving.

Jane Eyre is rebellious in a world demanding obedient women. Jane's personality contains many qualities that would be considered desirable in an English woman; she is frank, sincere, and she lacks of personal vanity. The rebel streak she has is targeted at inequalities of society. Jane reacts strongly when she is discredited due to her class or gender. She accepts every hurdles and hardships in life to build her own identity no matter how hard is life for her, only through her self-actualization of power of independence and gender equality.

Jane is strong in body and mind. She endures the unhealthy conditions at Lowood where many students had died and survived through cold and hunger and when she had run away from Thornfield and lived outside. Her mental strength is shown through her courage as a child with her evil aunt, bullying cousins, and hypocritical head master. She stayed true to herself and motivated to be successful as a woman in the time despite the difficult situations these people had created for her. She never failed in being independent and finally stored herself for building her own identity in the end.

### Conclusion

Charlotte Bronte is one of the female writers who tried to transfer the real image of the age to her readers with a special concern on women question. The novel *Jane Eyre* depicts the place of women in the patriarchal society and the struggles they faced for survival. Jane Eyre lived in an era in which patriarchy and capitalism were dominant. As a consequence of being a poor orphan girl, she gets patriarchal and class oppression since her childhood. These oppressions happen as a result of her status in the relation to the social rules at that time. Charlotte Bronte has been portrayed as a feminist writer because the novel is considered by many feminist critics to be as a good example of how a woman can develop her own history and identity. The story of *Jane Eyre* has been seen as highly autobiographical. In the same way as Jane rejects typical patriarchal female behavior and exerts her own way of dealing with situations, Charlotte Bronte has been seen as a forerunner of women's rights. The reason why it has also become the monument in the history of British women literature is that it declares the real wake of female consciousness. *Jane Eyre* embraces many views in opposition to the patriarchal feminine ideal.

Charlotte Bronte herself was among the first feminist writers of her time, and wrote this book in order to send the message of feminism to a patriarchal society in which women were looked upon as inferior and repressed by the society in which they lived. This novel embodies the ideology of equality between a man and woman in the society at large. As a feminist writer, Charlotte Bronte created this novel to support and spread the idea of an independent woman who works for herself, thinks of herself and acts of her own accord in building her identity. Bronte in her novel reflected the male oppression of women and the subjugating stereotypes placed upon them. Women in the novel, *Jane Eyre* were brought up to life only to serve in the domestic sphere. Class and gender defined their status as oppressed females in opposition to males who were oppressors. Bronte changed this image of oppressed women and pictured them as powerful females in search of their identity and independence and gender equality. Even though women confronted the hardships coming in their way, despite their sex as females, they still proved themselves powerful and attempted hard to break the tradition of domestic sphere as a way of expressing their rejection to the careless oppressing social codes and conventions which prohibited their progression.

Reading and understanding the novel would help in applying the needed theories in this novel. The study aims at showing the struggle of females to build their identity through self-actualization being independent, breaking the social value that women are placed within the domestic sphere and showing their resistance to strive further ahead in life. Charlotte Bronte advocates for a woman who knows her worth and the place in a society; for a woman who refuses to be a low-value commodity and who disdains convenience-based unions. This woman does not rely on social status or physical attributes to position herself in life; this woman believes only qualities of the mind and heart can show and prove a woman's real worth. Expectedly, a woman of such qualities would be out of place in the constitution of things within

patriarchal society. Her refusal to accept a limiting, passive role in society, and the challenge she poses to such norms with her attitude and behavior establish her as a progressive woman far from the submissive figure of the typical patriarchal woman. Bronte's novel shows that woman should always make her own voice and realize her own identity; struggle for her rights no matter how difficult is life and stand after every fall to prove herself without being discouraged at all times and creates a respectful life and position. Through her works, and *Jane Eyre* in particular, Bronte has become an important figure in the development of a female literary tradition.

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