

Delineation of Second Sex in the Early Novels of Victorian Scriber Thomas Hardy

Dr. Vineet Kumar Purohit

Associate Professor, Mahaveer Institute of Engineering and Technology, Jadan, Pali, Rajasthan, India

Abstract— Hardy has been called both a misogynist and radical exponent of women's freedom and rights. Victorian England had three sections of opinion on woman question (1) conservative patriarchal opinion, which had sexual double standards (2) Liberal Feminist group which agitated for equal rights but later upheld that woman's true destiny lies in fulfilling the role of wife and mother. It called marriage woman's highest vocation (3) Mona Caird's Radical Feminist group. Hardy supported it. 1860's witnessed the emergence of the so called 'New Woman', educated individualistic but still unfulfilled owing to subservience to men. Hardy did not present either metropolitan fashionable women or university educated campaigners, yet they emerge as determined and sophisticated. Hardy presents Susan as an archetypal sufferer. Bathsheba exuding independence, Eustacia as a rebel against cribbed existence. Tess as an interrogative to the conventional idea of chastity, Sue Bridehead as a representative New Woman. Who has awareness of herself raising the question of Woman's right over her body and senses? He pleads through Fancy Day that women should be educated seriously to develop intellectual and moral qualities. It is a fact Hardy could not openly offend the dominant trend but in a very sophisticated way, he had tried to present an unconventional woman. He is sympathetic towards woman's spirit of revolt. He felt that aim of marriage is not only sexual gratification or increase of population, but also the happiness of the individual. If marriage does not bring mutual joy, it becomes a social noose and so parting must be sought. Purity is of mind and not of body. A society built on cash nexus and women as commodity cannot give weight to humane qualities. The principle of equality should be the ordinary principle without conceding power or neither privilege on one side nor disability on the other. An attitude of tenderness is of much importance in human relationship than biological lineage.

I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism today is influenced, postulated, popularized, and precipitated by all kinds of thinkers and a distorted vision had been created before people. Earlier it was related to social and political changes but now the movement has extended to literary and cultural fields. It has become an extension of civil rights movement. Feminists have tried to find the basic reason which lies behind the inequality between the two sexes in order to undermine gender identity. They call feminism a political issue, Femaleness, a matter of biology, and femininity as culturally defined thing. Various types of feminism have emerged viz; Black Feminism, Liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism Radical Feminism, Literary Feminism etc. all round efforts have brought a slow but steady impact and lives of women are changing.

Hardy was a sensitive writer who was born in 1840 and published his first novel in 1871 and continued to produce till 1895 in quick succession. In the Victorian age with the industrial revolution and rise of Middle class, a spirit of emancipation was felt and particularly in women whose sole business in life was to look after the comforts of their menfolk. Women got political rights by and by. Problems of sex and married life began to receive attention. Hardy indulged in free discussion of marriage and sex relations. Science put all established beliefs to scrutiny. Moorings in God were lost.

Portrayal of women characters is the most significant facet in the oeuvre of Hardy's fiction, though there is a down – the – middle division of opinion among Hardy's critics in respect of his presentation of women. Some charge him with misogyny, others find in him a radical exponent of women's freedom and rights. The typical Victorian outlook accepts the stereotype of conformity in women who do not rebel against the socio-familial norms. The Saturday review, for example, in its June 17, 1876 issue launched a severe attack on the independent minded, non – conformist women and wrote:

“Women would seem to be getting tired of what they call the tame and monotonous sphere in which they are confined, and demand that the same range of active life and personal freedom should be opened up to them which is allowed to them ..(But) it is the harmonious cooperation of the two distinct influences of manly force and womanly tenderness and spirituality, and not the confounding of them in one common form, which keeps society sound and strong.”⁽¹⁾

By the time, Hardy serialized **Jude the Obscure** i.e. from December 1894 to November 1895 in Harper's new monthly magazine, **‘the marriage debate had been going on for a considerable time, in journals, magazines, and also, directly or indirectly in novels ...In fact, by 1895, there was a growing feeling that women might be saved by relief from child –bearing. yet this, the prevention of birth was a subject which novelists were extremely hesitant in approaching’⁽²⁾**

The socio – political space of Victorian England was ruled by at least three sections of opinion on the women question. There was, first, the conservative patriarchal opinion which was unable to dispense with the sexual double standard and to which the female sexuality still presented a threat to the

dominant culture which refused to grant women the opportunities granted to men. Secondly there was the liberal feminist group which agitated for women's equal rights with men, but the majority of the liberal feminists joined forces with the prominent emancipationist, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, in upholding the view that woman's true destiny lay in fulfilling the role of wife and mother, marriage being the woman's highest vocation.⁽³⁾

Thirdly, there was the radical feminist fringe, whose leader was the radical anti-marriage campaigner, Mona Caird. Hardy was already familiar with the new woman fiction and apart from endorsing Caird, congratulated George Egerton on her **keynotes**, first published 1893, with its radically subjective presentation of women as typically possessed of an untamed primitive savage temperament.

Hardy's feminist stance has an uneven growth between 1874 and 1895 when his major novels were written and published. It is contended that his **“early work reflects the conventions more or less uncritically but he becomes increasingly uneasy with them in his later work, until in *Jude the Obscure* and specially in *The Well Beloved* ‘a dialectical structure’ is developed in which the voice of patriarchy falters before the women that Hardy creates.”**⁽⁴⁾

But in fact Hardy reverts to conventional patriarchal sentiment in ***The Mayor of Casterbridge*** (1885) after espousing strong feminist cause in ***The Return of The Native*** (1878) conventional out look. Even ***Far From the Madding Crowd*** (serialized in Jan, 1874 in Corn Hill Magazine) flaunts a heroine who, in spite of her basic weakness, evinces a **‘self delighting, auto erotic passion’** which bespeaks her independence.⁽⁵⁾

It was in ***Tess and Jude*** that Hardy's complex view of women as variously Virgin and Coquette, as endurer and ingénue, as actor and victim culminates. **“The 1860's had witnessed the emergence of the so called ‘New Woman’, educated, individualistic, but still unfulfilled by the very fact of her continued subservience to men. Through the whole range of English fiction, Hardy's women are neither metropolitan blue stockings, nor university educated campaigners, yet they generally emerge as both more determined and more truly sophisticated than his male characters. They also range widely in terms of class and out look. *Tess Durbeyfield*, the Pure woman of the novel's subtitle has much of the passivity of an instinctive fatalist, but her native purity is reinforced by a countering strength of will which ultimately defies male domination and bourgeois condemnation alike. Her bids for freedom, are, however, all doomed. In *Jude the Obscure*, *Arabella Donn* is presented as both crude and exploitative, but she is also singularly practical and a survivor against the odds.”**⁽⁶⁾

Before setting out on a detailed analysis of various novels, we can focus our attention on a few prominent

females of Hardy, Susan is a victim of patriarchal hegemony. She is thrust in the mould of an archetype sufferer while her predecessor, Bathsheba, the farm woman, to a certain extent, exudes the spirit of independence, except when she is overtaken by her misplaced passion for Troy and has to undergo a brief spell of suffering. The wretchedness of her life is described thus, **“*She was conquered.... Her pride was indeed brought low She hated herself now*”** (Chapter 41)

Susan is a docile woman whose protest against a tippy and hence reckless Henchard's offer of sale of her does not consist in active resistance but a warning that she would walk out on him. This she actually does and this is because she is victim of a patriarchal – set up in which the male voice is the law. The wife sale is traditionally sanctioned because a few years before Hardy wrote the novel i.e. in 1881, the last recorded wife sale took place in Sheffield.”⁽⁷⁾

“Henchard in selling his wife and daughter to the sailor Newson, repeats in a startlingly blatant form the definitive patriarchal act of exchange.”⁽⁸⁾

Even the later reunion is built upon the miasma of wretchedness on the part of the weaker ‘other’. All the women – Susan, Lucetta, Elizabeth Jane are the instruments for the probing of the significance of patriarchal power for the male.

Bathsheba combines in her the vehemence of opposition to the idea of subjugation to a man through marriage and an inherent weakness for dazzle and outward extravagance. In her opposition to become some man's property in marriage she not only holds aloft the torch of protest against male hegemony, but also provides an early mould for shaping Sue. A young woman of the 1840's, nourished on the tenets of the old – testament, she is fully conscious of the sinfulness of the body. So she, **“not only protests vehemently against becoming some man's property in marriage, but also at Oak's suggestion that she should give herself to a man for reason's other than love, she displays a purity of conscience that he does not own.”**⁽⁹⁾

It is easy to locate a discreet reasonableness mixed with this purity of conscience which drives her to accept Oak as her husband and partner in life, whose patience, sagacity and protectiveness are in obvious contrast to Boldwood's infructuous infatuation. It is her purity of conscience which impels her to give an indignant rebuff to Oak when he makes the suggestion that she should have married Boldwood for she has captivated his heart. Oak is evidently unaware of the profanity lurking in his suggestion that a woman should give her body to a man because she has cost him. Later if she agrees to marry it is for some other reason. It is not love which is the principal motive force here, but a sense of duty which seems to be the scale tilting factor for love is **“an utterly by gone, sorry, worn out, miserable thing with me”** her promise to marry Boldwood seems to be

the incipient dichotomy that Hardy develops in Tess later between body and spirit. Her advice to Liddy too is significant, *“If ever you marry ... you will find yourself in a fearful situation but don’t you flinch. Stand your guard, and be cut to pieces.”* (Ch. 44)

When ultimately she marries Oak, she is actuated by a recuperative commitment to a partnership in working life, and by a feeling of love which is based not on sensuality or pride, but on mutual understanding and faith. The question of profamy or defilement of the body does not arise in such a union:

“Theirs was that substantial affection which arises when the two are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other’s character, and not the best.... The compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death – that love which many waters can not quench, nor the floods drown, besides which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam.” (Ch. 56)

If Bathsheba is a protester, Eustacia is a rebel. She rebels against the cribbed, cabined and cocooned existence that her marriage with Clym means to her. Her tragedy is the result of rank incompatibility with the ground realities of her life. In fact, she rebels against the limited resources of life that her husband can give her, that is, staying put on the heath. Her aversion to Clym’s place of choice is so paramount that making home in Paris has been a psychological fixity with her. The thought of going to Paris so engulfs her mind that after her nasty quarrel with Mrs. Yeobright over allegedly receiving money from Wildeve, she frankly urges her husband to take her to Paris, and not force her to remain glued to a place which she detests. It is symptomatic of a mental displacement that ultimately drives her to seek Wildeve’s not so Platonic assistance to go city of her dream and meet her doom.

What sort of woman Hardy wants his Eustacia to be. Is she an incorrigible romantic extrovert whose one point program in life is to enjoy the life of glitter – a combination of music, poetry, passion and all the beating and pulsing that are going on the arteries of the world or is she a wronged woman denied the rights that are her due? In the novel, she is at least five persons as and of these four bear the manifold colorings given by male vision which is often myopic, a result of male circumspensive attitudes. To her grandfather, she is alternately childish, romantical, nonsensical and sportive. To Venn, she is the tabled **Femme Falale** to the heath –folk, she is a witch. To Clym, she is first goddess, then whore. These views have to be juxtaposed against the contention of the author **“Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity”** (Ch. 7, Book I) Though at the same time, he warns that she would not make a model woman. Hardy shows the scale of imbalance against her in a male dominated world. She is an isolated figure, isolated from the usual flame of life on the Heath, watched and spied on by Venn for catching her on the wrong foot and her individualism has pushed her and Clym on the margins of

society **“Her individualism leaves her on the feared and misunderstood margins of society. It is interesting to notice that her marriage to Clym does not assimilate her into community, but rather marginalises him. Their isolation in their home removes Clym from the society of his family..”**⁽¹⁰⁾

She feels betrayed because he ignores her will to escape the Heath. She wants to be loved to madness and is desperate to enjoy life. Behind her sexual promiscuity lurks the sense of frustration, isolation and betrayal and she is to be judged in terms of this.

The addition of the subtitle **‘A Pure Woman’** to Tess of the D’ Urbervilles was a challenge thrown at the orthodox moral code of the Victorian times. When two well-known magazines rejected the novel on the ground of its **“improper explicitness”**, he bowdlerised the story omitting parts considered improper. But the principal question of the novel’s locus standi related to the purity of a fallen woman, for purity in women was synonymous with physical chastity. Hardy’s objective was to interrogate the conventional idea of chastity and set a new code of sexual and religious morality.

Her sexuality is self – indulgent. She is aware of her impassioned nature. Her auto eroticism causes her undoing though she can not be blamed for the rape seduction. Her confession before her husband of her spoilt past is an act of moral intrepidity and Angel’s rejection of her is unangelic. Hardy’s achievement as a feminist lies in uniting the fallen woman and her reformed husband and bridging the hiatus between them. She eliminates the seducer who has left her life in shambles and wronged Angel too. Angel promises her protection which is a duplication of his earlier promise.

By the time **Jude the Obscure** was written, the New Woman concept had become familiar. There are, however, the views regarding Sue Bridehead as a representative New Woman. **Penny Boumelha** is disinclined to consider her a New Woman and calls her an intellectualised, emancipated bundle of nerves while **Patricia Ingham**, calls her a representative of the new class because of her awareness of herself as a member of an oppressed sex rightly seeking autonomy, she is not merely against sex arid marriage but voices her contempt for a wife forced to be responsive to husband’s wishes at any time, at any place. **“He can ascend to the nuptial chamber quite as if sexual intercourse, were just a part of the days functions.”** (J.O. P.p. 22-29). Revulsion for such a loveless sex demanding husband is very well raised by Hardy in his plea for woman’s rights over her body and senses. It is a denial of false social embodiments of love.

Having sampled four female characters to illustrate Hardy’s attitude towards women and his effort, to go against the Victorian trend, we now proceed to probe in all the novels one by one to wean out feministic leanings of Thomas Hardy, his chief sympathy for women lies in his emotional rendering of women’s sufferings in the society which was

passing through a transitional phase from conventionalism to modernity. According to D.H. Lawrence, **“Tragedy in Hardy’s novels is associated with the fate of the individuals revolting against the society’s conventional standards of behaviour.”**⁽¹¹⁾

What is this revolt for – for self fulfilment in a society which was deeply entrenched in the concept of male – superiority and female submission. He made his point, showed his preferences, offered suggestions in such a way that his career was not jeopardized.

Desperate Remedies:

Cytherea Graye, the heroine, is presented as immature, dependent and vulnerable. She marries Aeneas Manston who had murdered his first wife. It is not only her sexual excitement at his masculinity but also a desire for economic security through marriage. She is shown as a woman yet to grow independent with education and awareness.

Under the Green Wood Tree:

It concentrates on Fancy Day’s choice of her lovers – Dick Dewy, Fred Shiner, and Arthur Maybold – and how she makes up her mind about one of them her life – partner. Her choice is made in relative freedom from most tangible forms of female dependency, parental control and direct financial pressures. The differences in education and class among her various lovers accentuate the gap between them and her, making her choice rather difficult and confusing. Finally she settles down with young and handsome Dick Dewy. Fancy Day is a qualified school teacher and has excellent academic achievements. Her father is well-to-do and so both ways she holds a good social position. She has also a talent for music. All these combined attributes stir the hearts of the young men into an upsurge of emotion for her. Her father rejects the eligibility of Dick Dewy as he is a farmer’s son but is brought round though for her father marriage is a means of establishing higher social status and Hardy upholds that marriage should not be decided on ecosocial consideration but on love. Education, too, should not be marriage – prospect enhancer but an instrument of self growth. How ridiculous is Fancy’s father’s blunt remark to Dick! She was educated:

“That if any gentleman, who sees her to be his equal in polish, should want to marry her and, she want to marry him. He shan’t be superior to her in pocket, Now, do you think after this that you be good enough for her.”⁽¹²⁾ (p.171)

Geoffrey feels that his daughter is a human coin that can be used in market of marriage. He forgets that women are to be educated seriously to develop intellectual and moral qualities, to nurture individuality and boldness. **“At the beginning of the nineteenth century, women had virtually no rights at all. They were the chattels of their fathers and husbands. They were bought and sold in marriage.”**⁽¹³⁾ (Juliet Mitchell: The Rights and Wrongs of Women Great

Britain, Penguin, 1976, p. 381) Fancy Day, too, makes it emphatically clear to Dick that she cares for more herself and dons airs of superiority, Actually even in Dick’s opinion she is a girl who bothers more about externals than internals, superficial than depths. In her hierarchy of priorities he stands at number three – the first two being hair and complexion, gowns and hats. Such vanities are impediments to a woman’s real progress.

Mary Wollstonecraft states, **“In short, women, in general have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization and missed the useful fruit ... their senses are inflamed and their understandings neglected, consequently, they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. Civilized women are therefore so weakened by false refinement that respecting morals, their condition is much below.”**⁽¹⁴⁾

Fancy’s appreciation of Lover’s love depends on their voicing of admiration of her. She tells Dick, **“I like to hear you praise me in that way, Dick. It is meat and drink to a woman. Do I look nice, really.”** (p.185) Again, **“Praise is life to me.”** (p. 200)

Vanity and ambition have a devastating effect. Simone de Beauvoir remarks, **“she considers little things important for lack of any access to great things, and further more the futilities that fill her days are often of the most serious practical concern to her.** She owes her charm and her opportunities to her dress and beauty. She often appears to be lazy, indolent but the occupations available to her are as empty as the pure passage of time.”⁽¹⁵⁾

This makes woman’s horizon closed.

Hardy believes that mutual understanding and frankness are essential keys to a successful marriage, and is doubtful of the future of Dick – Fancy marriage though overtly they express full trust.

“We will have no secrets from each other, darling, will we ever? No secrets at all.”
“None from today” (p. 222).

Hardy appreciates and denounces both –for good and bad qualities. Fancy exercises her free will in her choice of lovers. She defies the conventional norms of the Age by choosing what is good for her changes can occur in society only through gentle persuasion and smooth transition. So change is noticeable in the novel. Change is inevitable and Hardy’s perception finds expression in the novel.

Far From the Madding Crowd:

The mingling of pathos and happiness, and setting the principal characters into a measure of chastened happiness with a marked stress on furious passions, thwarted purposes and shattering griefs make the novel’s title ironic as the realities behind the idyllic calm of the pictorial scene are grim. The mainspring of the plot is Bathsheba who was a capricious

woman. It is her capriciousness that creates the necessary web in which Gabriel Oak and Boldwood are caught. She arouses Oak's interest in her and then rejects him. She writes a Valentine to Boldwood and disturbs his peaceful life. When he feels interested, she marries Troy. Her fickleness causes frustration not only to Oak and Boldwood but also to herself. Love promises usually to be a fountain of joy and fulfilment but becomes a reservoir of disappointment and frustration.

Bathsheba is a woman of independent nature and capable of strong hold on life on a footing equal to men. This is quite evident in the way she handles the dishonest bailiff, deals with men at the corn market in business transactions and behaves at the harvest festivals with great confidence. The outstanding strength of her personality is her capacity for her cool confident demeanour after the shooting of Sergeant Troy. She does not faint at the incident and is in perfect control of the situation. There is substance in Hardy's description of her as **"the stuff of which great men's mothers are made"** and **"an Elizabeth in brain and Mary Stuart in spirit."** But with all her independence and self confidence, she is vulnerable to her feminine frailty. She is at once attracted to Sergeant Troy, though his behaviour is offensive. She is incapable of judging men and fails to discriminate between surface glitter and the real gold. Hence, she falls an easy prey to Troy's shrewd flatteries. Impulses sweep her and passion shakes her. She can't bear even Troy's kissing of a dead Fanny Robin.

Hardy says, ***"Bathsheba, though she had too much understanding to be entirely governed by her womanliness, had too much womanliness to use her standing to the best of her advantage."*** So she plunges in action without caring a fig about consequences –initial haste and subsequent repentance, jilting one to marry another. Then she gets a marital disillusionment with Troy and imagines what her life would have been with Boldwood and Oak. Really, she is quite an unconventional heroine her horse riding with great self –assurance, her explicit overtures to her lover's and her almost masculine handling of her business are inconsonance with the concept of the New Woman.

Katherine Rogers wrote that though **"Thomas Hardy repeatedly shaped his characters and plots to show his sympathy with women and his awareness of the disadvantages society laid upon them.... If we look beyond, Hardy's conscious intentions to such things as repeated themes, incidental comments and subtle differences in the presentation of analogous male and female characters, we find evidence that he could not altogether overcome the sexual stereotypes of his culture."**⁽¹⁶⁾

Surely, Hardy could not openly offend the dominant trend but in a very sophisticated and intelligent manner, he has tried to present an unconventional woman. The very way in which Bathsheba is introduced, admired and controlled by the male point of view is entirely relevant to her

characterization in the largest sense. Her complex struggles with the various male 'looks' she confronts, are mirrored by her difficulties with the patriarchal society. **"Her story depicts both the possibilities open to, and the limitations imposed upon, a spirited woman who tries to affirm her individuality in a society unready to accept unconventional behaviour, particularly on the part of a woman."**⁽¹⁷⁾

From the very outset, Bathsheba reveals her ambivalence about becoming, like most women, a visual and sexual possession. She wishes to live by her own rules and to take charge of her life. She early asserts that she had no sweet heart because ***"I hate to be thought man's property in that way"*** and that she is inserted in ***"being a bride at a wedding (only), if I could be one without having a husband"*** (p. 32-33). She possesses articulateness, almost always an emblem of superiority in Hardy's fiction, glibly teasing and criticising Oak in their early encounters and she is ***"a novelty among women –One who finished a thought before beginning the sentence which was to convey it."*** (p. 23)

Not only is she intellectually in charge, she is physically assertive, as in the scenes in which she runs after Oak to clean –up a misunderstanding and in which she rescues him from near death, dashing milk on his face, holding him in her lap, and unbuttoning his collar in a tableau that intriguingly suggests both a **pieta** and a seduction scene with Bathsheba as, the sexual aggressor Oak, ironically, seems far more **'female'** than she in these early scenes. Bathsheba soon progresses from emotional and intellectual control to economic control when her uncle leaves her his farm in recognition of her capabilities. The **'unpractical girl,** develops in to a **'supervising and cool woman."** (56) Giving order to her male employees. When she gives the speech announcing her decision to be her own bailiff, thus augmenting her already considerable responsibilities, she performs with great confidence vowing to do **"my best"** and **"to astonish you all"** (93). Women farmers were not unknown in Hardy's day but they were certainly uncommon in fiction, strong unmarried females running their own farming operations appeared only in early twentieth century.

Both Bathsheba's competence and her desire to succeed are impressive but she soon encounters a series of difficulties that reveal the dangers for a woman of being alone, being different and being a cynosure. The denizens of the Malhouse serve as a rustic chorus calling her **"proud as a Lucifer", 'a very vainfeymell'** (48), denigrate her as a **'tomboy'** and **"a headstrong maid."** Even Oak blames her for the threatened loss of harvest and attributing **"to the instability of a woman"** (279). Despite her strengths, Bathsheba cannot escape the reductive situation of being a **'sight'**, a physical object to the male eyes around her.

Though Bathsheba is more fortunate than many of Hardy's heroines in having confidantes and being a member of a closely – knit community, she often feels friendless and

unprotected **“with nobody in the world to fight my battles for me”** (235). She, in spite of her desire for independence, feels some pressure to accept a worthwhile offer of marriage, because **“in every point of view, ranging from politics to passionate, it was desirable that she, a lonely girl, should marry”**(148). About a decade before Hardy wrote this novel, an article in the **National Review** had lamented the **“redundancy”** of the single women in England, **“who in place of completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others, are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own.”** The writer called women of strength and intelligence **‘abnormal’** and suggested that no woman should hold a responsible job because **“the cerebral organization of the female is far more delicate than that of man.”**⁽¹⁸⁾

Still Bathsheba feels powerless to prevent her husband’s imprudent use of her modest wealth on betting. The married women’s Protective Act 1870 ensured it. Still community pressures work on her. **“She (Bathsheba) thus evinces a harmonious blend of the masculine and the feminineThe marriage of Oak and Bathsheba seems highly appropriate as an outgrowth of their separate arrivals at a point where the masculine and feminine in each one of them are nicely integrated, for it represents the merging of those balanced individuals in a larger whole”**.⁽¹⁹⁾

A harmonious equilibrium is attained and Hardy comments on the merits of camaraderie between men and women which **“is unfortunately seldom superadded to love between the sexes, because men and women associate, not in their labours, but in their pleasures merely.”** (456).

Troy’s statement, **“you are nothing to me – nothingA ceremony before a priest does not make a marriage. I am not morally yours”** (282) seems Hardy’s comment on marriage Hardy draws our attention to the fact that just a contract can not make a marriage and marriages must be based on mutual trust and understanding between men and women. Mirian Brody asserts: **“rather than sexual adventure outside marriage, the ideal (of marriage) demanded fidelity and chastity for men and women.”**⁽²⁰⁾

The title ‘Fanny’s Revenge’ also shows Hardy’s consistent defence of women’s rights and aspirations. Both the novels **Under the Greenwood Tree** and **Far From The Madding Crowd** are Hardy’s attempts to educate his heroines that vanity can not, under any circumstances lead then to independence but will only destroy their chances of emotional and social security. Hardy recommends a marriage like that of Oak and Bathsheba which is not based momentary infatuation Simone De Beauvoir remarks: **“On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abuse herself but to assert herself ... on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.”**⁽²¹⁾

Bathsheba is tested to the limits of her endurance by the blows of harsh and cruel events that expose her vanity and proclaim her courage to the full. She leaves the dire consequences of pride and pretensions as she emerges as an independent woman with a solid judgement.

The Return of the Native:

This novel is a drama of passion and nemesis enacted amidst the wild scenery of an imaginary heath. It is profoundly animated by Hardy’s philosophy of life and revolt against operation of natural laws and of society and peoples. Our imagination with a new world of intensely living personalities, with the thwarted aspirations of the heroine and the irretrievable disaster. Eustacia’s plaintive cry is not only against Fate but also against the male dominated society.”

“O the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world ! I was capable of much, but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control ! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who had done no harm to heaven at all !”

Social conventions and inhibitions dwarf a woman’s aspiring soul:

“Had it been possible for the earth and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for a while, had she handled the distaff, the spindle and the shears at her own free will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up favours here, of contumely, there, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alternations of caresses and blows that we endure now.” (p. 89)

The story of the novel gets textured in terms of the rebellious spirit, violent passions, treachery, hatred, failure and despair of the leading characters. The novel is processed through the tangled skein of love and marital relationship. The leading rebels are Wildev, Clym and Eustacia. The native is Clym Yeobright who returns from Paris to Egdon Heath preferring the Heath to the splendour of Paris. His wife Eustacia, however is enamoured of Paris and Parisian life. Eustacia is a woman of violent passions, strong likes and dislikes who gets despaired at husband’s attitude and wishes to end her life. Both have a quest of self identity.

Hardy’s leading characters are rebels to the value –system of social convention, not accepting things as they prevail, feeling circumscribed by the limitations of the social world, of pestered by the sense of entrapment and frustrated aspirations. Eustacia suffers from bitterness at life’s injustices. Lawrence writes, **“What does she want? She doesn’t know, but it is evidently some form of self realization; she wants**

to be herself, to attain herself. But she does not know how, by what means.”⁽²²⁾

The kind of fulfilment that Eustacia seeks is provided by convention, namely, love and marriage. She fluctuates between two males in her attempt to seek fulfilment but it eludes her. Convention prevents her from fully understanding the complexity of the social and ideological repressions to which she is subjected. She thinks that it is the heath which is preventing her from being happy. She feels that right man and right environment can give her content. Her Budmouth visit and its charms had made her spurn the heath and she lived in a suppressed state but her vitality could not be replaced by languor and stagnation. This element of unconventionality in the celebration of Eustacia’s sexuality as an invigorating force defies Victorian notions. When Hardy says that she was fit enough for a goddess but not a model woman, he is stairising the conventional picture of a desirable woman. The desirable woman is **“the angel in the house whose helpless and dependent status, submissive and cultivated lady –like manners, and quiet air of patient suffering”** make her a delightful creature to men.”⁽²³⁾

In this novel, the model woman is easily identifiable with Thomasin who **“exhibits submissiveness not imperiousness, docility not fervour, amiability not anger, demureness not passion.”**⁽²⁴⁾

“To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven for me” (189) seems to hold key to her desires. The active social life of Paris holds the prospect of ‘freedom’ to her. This ‘freedom’ is not merely ‘splendid life’ she has envisioned but also a space. Clym’s project of educating the rustics is illusory but his dominating gender position and social status allow him to pursue his ambitions however misconceived. Though Eustacia shares the same status, she has no power to create a space in society for herself, according to her will. So what she resents most is her lack of freedom. In fact, everything she considers fate is predominantly decisions of men around her. Rosemarie Morgan in her essay on this Novel writes that **“the world of freedom and action that Hardy’s greater heroines would shape, for themselves disintegrates as rapidly as the man made world superimposes upon them its own curbing shape. With the advent of adulthood and a fully awakened sexual consciousness, every exploratory move towards self-discovery, self realization and sexual understanding meets with obstruction in a male – dominated world intent upon high – ranking the docile woman over the daring, the meek over the assertive, the compliant over the self determining, the submissive over the dynamic. There is no area of exploration, whether occupational, sexual or merely developmental – that does not eventually conflict with the dominant male will to dispossess woman of autonomy, identity, purpose and power.”**⁽²⁵⁾ The continuous tension between her and what to her appears as fate lends validity to her rebellion.

Her first taste of freedom through her grandfather creates within her an intense desire to live and control her own life. She resents decisions which take no account of her wishes. She wants to assume control over her circumstances. She seems to be at the point of realizing that **“gender is not only a question of difference, which assumes that sexes are separate and equal; but of power, since in looking at the history of gender relations, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality; and male dominance.”**⁽²⁶⁾ Even while attaining sexual liberation, Eustacia is bound by gender which is **“a complex social, cultural and psychological determinant”** imposed upon a biological identity. Her struggle against this determinacy declares Eustacia as non-conforming to her gender position in society. But her uncritical placing of faith in the kind of active life illustrated by Budmouth of Paris as the ultimate prospects of self fulfilment, takes away her means of completely grasping gender based exploitation in society. She is unable to understand that her shifting, unstable but vibrantly alive, restless passions indicate a discontent which has the larger implications of a protest against gender based injustices of society which render women passive. Instead, she thinks that it is the heath which is preventing her from being happy. Hence, Wildeve, Clym and Paris become goals for her. By accepting certain conventions as norms of her life, Eustacia is unable to recognize the constructive nature of society which conditions men, women and all discourse to maintain women as **“willing slaves”** society **“assigns different roles to the two sexes, surrounds them from birth with an expectation of different behaviour, plays out the whole drama of courtship, marriage and parenthood in terms of the types of behaviour believed to be innate and therefore appropriate for one sex or for the other.”**⁽²⁷⁾

This gives birth to cultural stereotypes which practiced over a period of time become the provenance of convention. Conventions are maintained obviously when there is a certain group which benefits from them. These become socially given and unalterable notions which in actual terms are ideological or social constructs. The nature of her discontent is such that the men in her life, as well as the places she uncritically craves for can only be preoccupation. **Her rebellion is against the circumscribed, repressed and completely closed existence destined for women.** The novel, then, lends itself challenging the conventionally ascribed sphere for women, primarily through the portrayal of Eustacia.

The ideologies governing gender conditioning need to be deconstructed to reveal that **‘nature’** of women is an **‘artificial’** thing. The stereotypical image of Victorian womanhood as passive, self-sacrificing and content with a purely domestic role was progressively challenged by scores of activist women in the nineteenth century who campaigned together for suffrage and education. They raised public opinion in order to reform the institution of marriage, to provide wider vocational opportunities against the Victorian

patriarchy. Gender studies base themselves upon hypocrisies and injustices inflicted upon women under the guise of convention.

Eustacia's indulgent and carpedium existence, thus, is an expression of her rebellion against conventional gender expectations. Eustacia's conception is perhaps the most radical force in the novel which explores the problem of lack of space for a confrontational woman in society. Eustacia's rebellion itself is partial, for she never does succeed in attaining herself for the success of her rebellion implies a kind of upheaval that would uproot the patriarchal structures of society. But the valid aspect of her rebellion lies precisely in her non-conforming attitude till her death, which remains a challenge, a question, to preconceived ideas about woman's destiny. Even in her death, she remains unreconciled to the heath. Though Eustacia does not have the necessary tools or experience by which to analyse her dilemma, she initiates questioning of fundamental issues of individual and society, and more specifically of women and society relationships.

Throughout the novel we note Hardy's deep sympathy for the way Eustacia feels about her frustrated and empty life. It is her cramped life that leads her to turn to the idea of passionate love as a way of gratifying her need for life and more important as a way of fulfilling herself as a person. Simone de Beauvoir states, **"woman is shut up in a kitchen or in a boudoir, and astonishment is expressed that her horizon is limited. Her wings are clipped and it is found deplorable that she can not fly. Let but the future be opened to her, and she will no longer be compelled to linger in the present."**⁽²⁸⁾

Hardy also lays emphasis on Eustacia Vye's relation with Egdon Heath. He defies her as an outsider, an alienated woman barred from useful activity. She belongs to Budmouth, a fashionable seaside resort where she has contacts with high society people. Death of parents brings her to the Heath to her grandfather. These circumstances drive her to find an outlet for her pent-up feelings so that she could lead a more satisfying life. Her prayer evidences her deep – set frustration:

"O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness', send me great love from some where, else I shall die." (67)

Love comes first in the form of treacherous Wildevve and then in the form of idealist Clym. While Eustacia can not endure the Heath, Clym feels that the Heath is the most exhilarating and soothing thing. So materialism measures swords with idealism. Hardy believes that the desire for materialism and its fulfilment a path leading to self achievement. Clym has passed through it and for Eustacia, it is a dream yet to be fulfilled. Hardy views that such a stage can not be cut out of the natural stages of development:

"In passing from the bucolic to intellectual life, the intermediate stages are usually two at least, frequently many more, and one of

these stages is almost sure to be worldly advance. We can hardly imagine bucolic placidity quickening to intellectual aims without imagining social aims as the traditional phase." (174)

The same applies to Eustacia who can not proceed form a stage of ignorance to intellectuality without going through one of the intermediate stages namely worldly ambition. Simone de Beauvoir remarks, **"Let the future be opened to her and she will no longer cling desperately to the past. When women are called upon for concrete action when they recognize their interest in the designated goals, they are as bold, as courageous as men."**⁽²⁹⁾

Eustacia is bold, rebellious and unconventional. Heath is so unbearable to her that to avoid it's sight, she stays indoors, overhauls the cupboards, hums ballads, sings psalms, reads the Bible to pass her time to kill time in isolation. This restricted cribbed situation is emphasized by Mary Wollstonecraft:

"Confined them in the cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but the plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin, but health, liberty and virtue are given in exchange."⁽³⁰⁾

Man possesses a woman and after initial bouts of passionate amour gets cool towards her Frank. Troy did the same and so does Samon Wildevve who is weary of what is offered, who cares for the remote, who dislikes the near and these traits are very common to menfolk particularly in relation to their women. Such an attitude leads to their infidelity having fallen in the trap of amorous delusions or engaged in hectic cerebration's for entrapment of the new flame. In the case Wildevve, the only thing that can rouse him to an emotional fever is to see his wife desired by someone else. This explains men's mentality that women are merely sexual objects to be exploited and possessed. John & Mill observes on men's attitude towards women:

"Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men except the most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not slave, merely but a favourite."⁽³¹⁾

Hardy feels that intelligence and ability in an ambitious woman become self – destructive in a society which has no appreciation for such women. He is sympathetic towards Eustacia's spirit of revolt even though it is misdirected towards materialistic goals **"The adolescent girl often thinks that she can simply scorn convention but even there she is engaged in public agitation; she is creating a situation entailing consequences she must assume. When**

one fails to adhere to an accepted code, one becomes an insurgent."⁽³²⁾(Simone De Beauvoir:p.62). Long back, Shakespeare, aware of Male nature prescribed through one of his characters in a play: **"O how full of briars is this work a day world.If we walk not on trodden ways,our very petticoats will catch them."**⁽³³⁾

Eustacia, in her extremely 'humiliating' and insufferable situation, plans per escape with an unworthy lover. However, Hardy views her desperate action, dissipated energies and her triviality with remarkable compassion. He offers a contrast in Thomasin. While Eustacia is unable to conform to conventions, Thomasin is quite content in her role as a wife and mother, a typical Victorian woman who accepts the superiority of man over woman and the social norms of the period. Therefore, she under no psychological pressure to revolt against anything and revolt is repugnant to her, **"In a generous woman, resignation takes the form of forbearance: she puts up with everything, she condemns no one, because she holds that neither people nor things can be other than they are."**⁽³⁴⁾ Some one woman is carved in the mould of a forbearing woman while the other is a rebel who rejects society's concept a woman's status and indulges in a ceaseless search for excitement, achievement and self-fulfilment, taking love to be cordial to ease the eating loveliness of her days. She does not understand that life can't be led on suppositions and assumptions and loneliness can't be relieved by half-hearted palliatives and spurious adoptions.

In the nineteenth century women were educated so as to be well – equipped with the means to find fulfilment in life through family relationships and affections. Such a satisfaction derived from life was regarded to be more than adequate compensation for the restrictions imposed on women by the society. Referring to Rosemarie Tong's book **Feminist Thought**, Mary Wollstonecraft says, **"Women should be provided with a real education, one that sharpens and focuses her mind and gives her a chance to develop her rational and moral capacities, her full human potential."** (Wollstonecraft. p. 15)

The Mayor of Casterbridge:

Through this novel Hardy examines the Victorian codes of male supremacy through the characterization of Michael Henchard. While attempting to cast off his passionate self, Henchard goes through a process of self- discovery and enlightenment of his own vulnerability. Past is never dead and forgotten. Past errors are pawned and return to demand payment with excruciating interest. Life is a Shylock. It charges with usury every moment of success and joy Misfortunes befall Henchard in quick succession and he is thrown back to the ichor that inembriates. He breathes his last as an uncared, unloved and unlamented man.

The opening scene is not only dramatic but is the centre of all subsequent events. The sale of wife and daughter is presented as the most disgraceful stigma of female subordination and humiliation. It is a sinful act that violates the

moral sense of humanity. Such a sale shows Henchard's desire to trade with women as his own property in accordance to his will, whim or need. Mill says, **"Men should not be trusted with absolute power. Such an absolute power within family and marriage leads to brutalization of women."**⁽³⁶⁾

Hardy pondered deep over the question of marriage and sexuality and came to the conclusion that much human misery can be avoided only if there is a reform of marriage laws. Marriage should not be the result of a momentary impulse or a passing fancy. A marriage to be successful, to be most conducive to the happiness of the couple should be based on harmony of tastes and temperaments. Imprudent marriages lead to the frustration of youth's high aims and hopes. Henchard feels that, his marriage with Susan has ruined his life:

"I do not see why men who have got wives and do not want them, should not get rid of them as these gypsy fellows do of their horses." (p.8)

Hardy comments in the preface to another novel (Jude the Obscure), **"A marriage should be dissolved as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties – being then essentially no marriage."** The aim of marriage is not only sexual gratification or increase of population, but also the happiness of the individual. If mutual joy is not consequenced by joining of hands, relief in parting should be sought for such marriages are **social nooses and gins**. Hardy's ideas got unwarranted excoriation but Hardy never advocated promiscuity or sexual licence. He only wanted a **liberalization of marriage laws in favour of the weaker sex**. Purity is of mind and not of body. He abhorred the Christian double standards of morality – one standard of judgement for women and another for men. He advocated a closer interaction of the social machinery, a reform of the laws, more just to the weaker sex.

Susan's meek acceptance of her fate and the traces of legality with which her poor mind struggles serves to highlight the maltreatment of women in general. There seems to be no law in existence at the time to prevent a woman from being auctioned like a cattle at a fair. Hardy places the blame on Susan for her passivity which is the main obstacle of women's progress. In condemning the passive attitude of Susan, Henchard says:

"Well, I must walk about till I find herseize her, why didn't she know better than bring me into this disgrace! he roared out. She wasn't queer if I was. It is like Susan to show some idiotic simplicity. Meek – that meekness has done me more harm than the bitterest temper!"(p. 17)

In the feudal bourgeois society woman was reduced to a commodity and that was accepted by the society

without any qualms. A society built on cash nexus can not but turn human beings into objects and things **“The principle that regulates existing marital relations between husband and wife is wrong and unjust. It is a major impediment to the improvement of the human race. On the contrary, the Principle of equality should be the ordering principle without conceding power or privilege on the one side nor disability on the other.”**⁽³⁷⁾ While critics have concentrated on the sale of wife, the sale of daughter has escaped gaze for **“selling of a son would have been a violation of patriarchal culture.”**⁽³⁸⁾ The rejection of the wife who has borne only a female offspring may be attractive to male fantasy. Rosemarie Tong remarks, **“To eliminate male control, men and women have to eliminate gender-specificity, sexual status, role and temperament – as it has been constructed under patriarchy.”**⁽³⁹⁾

After the sale, Henchard tries to evade full responsibility of his abominable crime by attributing it to drunkenness and lack of reason and control. Henchard’s painful realization of his mistake makes him abstain from drinking for nineteen long years. He keeps a haughty indifference to women’s company and avoids converse with the sex, becomes a kind of woman hater, deprives himself of the basic human need for passion, tenderness and care in ‘life’. Simone De Beauvoir observes, **“The fact is that today neither men nor women are satisfied with each other. But the question is to know whether this is an original curse that condemns them to rend each other or whether the conflicts in which they are opposed merely mark transitional moment in human history.”**⁽⁴⁰⁾

Three ordeals lead Henchard to misery – estrangement with Farfrae, demise of Susan and revelation of Elizabeth Jane’s real parentage, the denunciation by the furmity woman. This accelerated his descent with a great velocity. Nemesis followed him. In human act in public was retributed by a dishonour in public. This conforms to Hardy’s vehement defence of women’s rights. Another instance of Hardy’s concern is present when a plain dressed Lucetta goes to meet Henchard and there is a self discovery in Henchard, **“The unusual plainness of her dress, her attitude of hope and appeal, So strongly revived in his soul the memory of another ill used woman who had stood there and thus in bygone days, and had now passed away into her rest that he was unmanned, and his heart smote him for having attempted reprisals on one of a sex so weak.”**⁽²⁸⁸⁾

The sight of the effigy of himself floating in the stream is symbolic – **“the symbolic shell of a discarded male self, like a chrysalis. It is the completion of his unmanning a casting – off of the attitudes, the empty garments, the facades of dominance and authority.”**⁽⁴¹⁾

Susan is weak, simple and passive as all women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self – control but submission, and

yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is their duty to love for others, to make complete abnegation of themselves. They are not told that sensitivity and better understanding between the sexes is the bedrock of a healthy society. When the slavery of half the humanity is abolished, then the division of humanity will reveal its genuine significance and the human couple will find its true form. If that is not done then the woman who does not conform devalues herself sexually and socially since sexual values are an integral feature of society.

Why did the Susan accept the sailor? Her compliance, too, is a crucial matter. Her willingness to accept the sailor as well as her implicit faith in the legality of the transaction and transaction points to Hardy’s analogy with marriage. A bourgeois marriage is a voluntary sale for Hardy most middle class marriages are sales disguised as sacrament. The bargain here is profitable to all- Susan gets a more genial husband, Elizabeth Jane, a more loving father, Henchard is relieved of the clogs of marriage. The sale reveals the primitive underside of the culture. The fair suggests the underlying atavism upon which society rests. The auction reflects stripped of its sacramental varnish. Edward Westermack in his **The History of Human Marriage (1891)** says that marriage by purchase is a reality while marriage by capture is a symbol. In **The Origin of Civilization (1871)**, Sir John Lubbock points out that marriage far from being a divinely appointed imperative is, in fact, a social custom designed to ensure legitimacy and protect property. Hardy indicts the inauthenticity of marriage, its pretensions and society’s complicity in hiding its real nature. Remarriage with Susan is an act of redemption, a buying back in five guineas a reversion of the earlier, perversion, setting the wrong right.

Another question that pesters mind is, why does Susan return and remarry, Henchard after a lapse of a long period? Susan is described as an idealized figure of the Victorian notion of ‘**home-spun**’ woman who suffers all through her life, with infinite patience, with Henchard she got nothing but wrongs, disgrace and hot temper. Her sale indicates that she does not own even her body. She is further burdened with a female child. Her maternal function or motherly responsibility is one of the fundamental conditions which makes her dependent on men. All her desires, hopes and ambitions move round her daughter. She is not both bothered as to what happens to her. Her return explains the severe constraints of the ideology of womanhood. She accepts the sale as a natural fate of a decisive, wilful commitment to a relationship. It is a passive surrender to a powerful socio-economic reality because the Victorian society does not provide her sufficient scope for economic independence and stability. As a woman she can not give the desired protection to her growing daughter and becomes more and more tense in apprehension of her daughter’s economic deprivation and the social need for a paternal protection. Her whole life is a long search for patronage of a father figure. She renounced her own search for autonomy through the misconception of her

reproductive role. Her desire for a masculine protection can be interpreted as a sort of indoctrination towards a phallic identity which is supposed to be essential for a full – fledged womanly existence.

Henchard, too, had married her for the daughter's sake and the discovery of her true identity proves shocking to him. His disappointment is engendered by his overwhelming indulgence with the male – centred values of the Victorian patriarchal society. As a married woman, Susan is a non – entity as wife's legal identity is dissolved in marriage. The three women in the novel are mere subordinates to the governing patriarch – Henchard. They are simply projection of different male fantasies of legality and paternity. Henchard's attitude to human relationship is an extension of his attitude to law and property. He can't move towards an affiliative relationship due to the overpowering effect of patriarchal ideology of paternity such a value system makes Susan inferior and powerless and puts her at the receiving end. Her domestic activities are invisible and non-activities before Henchard's public activities in the patriarchal definition of works and power. Which denies her a participation in the public sphere. In the search for a social self for her daughter, Susan denies herself an essential human self. Even Elizabeth does not control her situation and with the mother's death she cries, '*O, I wish I was dead with dear mother!*'. (156) She is as much part of Henchard's household belongings as Susan was. Hardy says "*The two unassuming women scarcely made a perceptible addition to house's contents*" (99).

Later Henchard's appreciation of Elizabeth's strength and dignity is his realization of the inadequacy of patriarchal culture of parenthood. He becomes an inverted mother breaking the illusion of paternity and legality of the dominant culture. He moves towards a **feminist way** of looking at life and reality. By the end, we find an enlightened Henchard like an enlightened Lear in Shakespeare's play:

"He experienced not only the bitterness of a man who finds, in looking back upon an ambitious course, that what he has sacrificed in sentiment was worth as much as what he had gained in substance; but the superseded bitterness of seeing his very recantation nullified. He had been sorry for this long ago; but his attempts to replace ambition by love had been as fully foiled as his ambition itself. His wronged wife had foiled them by a fraud so grandly simple as to be almost a virtue, It was an old sequence that out of all this tampering of the social law, came that flower of nature, Elizabeth, Part of his wish to wash his hands of life arose from his perception of its contrarious inconsistencies." (364 - 65)

He learns that an attitude of tender care is of much more importance in human relationship than the biological lineage. It is in Michael Henchard, at the end of the novel, one sees the dawn of feminist values inaugurating a new human and social relationship, a new dignity to women's role and a new valuation to motherhood. Thus, we find Hardy defending women and fighting for their rights. He criticises male supremacy exercised by Henchard and sympathises with Susan's simplicity ignorance and docility. The novel can be read as a story of the bending and breaking of the male against the female endurance and tolerance. "**Stripped of his mayor's chair, his master's authority, his fathers rights, Henchard is in a sense unmanned.**"⁽⁴²⁾

It was the time when the Industrial Revolution was taking place and its effect was felt all around. Society was showing signs of change and certain social values were losing significance. Education had begun to close the gap between town and country. There was a new attitude towards sex too. Hardy in these novels has shown his feministic leanings and advocated a better dealing for women.

II. CONCLUSION

Hardy is a creator of unique women characters. He seemed to have sentimental nature of woman and that helped him to project woman's mind and heart. Woman is more elemental than Man. She is swayed more by instinctive life and so women are the Kernel of his novels, the mainspring of action. His conception of women is modern violating the self – imposed taboos of the early Victorians. Hardy shows an unflagging interest in women's doings and misdoings. He shows women superior to men in clarity of vision and intensity of passion. His women are divisible in two types (1) capricious, passionate and self –conscious interested chiefly in their vanity and ladyism e.g. Lucetta, Eustacia and Bathsheba (2) patient reticent and humble e.g. Elizabeth Jane, Thomasin, Grace and Marty South. All have a common trait – error of Judgment, and weakness of resolution.

Primary Sources:-

1. The Mayor of Casterbridge
2. Far From the Madding Crowd
3. Tess of D'Urbervilles.
4. Jude the Obscure.
5. The Return of the Native
6. Desperate Remedies
7. Under the Greenwood Tree

REFERENCES

- [1]. Cited in Women and Sexuality in the novels of T. Hardy, Routledge 1988 p.82
- [2]. Jenni Calder, Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, Thames and Hudson, London, 1976 P.p. 1985-96
- [3]. Rosemary Morgan, Women and Sexuality in novels of T. Hardy Opp. Cit. XIV

- [4]. Reader's Guide To Lit. in English – Mark Howkins Dady ed. FD, USA, 1996, p. 343
- [5]. Morgan op. cit. p. 60
- [6]. The Short Oxford His of E. Lit Andrew Sanders, oup 2000, p. 46
- [7]. Free and Ennobled source Readings in the Development of Victorians feminism ed. Baucer and Fitt, Oxford, 1979) cited by Morgan (op. Cit.) in Novels p. 189
- [8]. Penny Boumelha: Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form, Harvester Press, Sussex: p. 21-22
- [9]. Morgan op. cit p. 110
- [10]. Penny Boumelha op. cit. 53
- [11]. Bruce Steels Ed, study of Thomas Hardy and other essays D.H. Lawrence Cambridge Uni Press, 1985, p. 21
- [12]. P.171
- [13]. Juliet Mitchell: The Rights and Wrongs of Women Great Britain, Penguin, 1976, p. 381
- [14]. Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Women, ed A Trauchert, London, Everyman, 1995, P.p. 68-69
- [15]. De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Britain Picador 1988, p. 615
- [16]. Katherine Rogers "Women in Thomas Hardy" centennial Review 19 (1975) p. 249
- [17]. Judith Bryant Wittenberg : 'Angles of Vision and Question of Gender In Far From Madding Crowd in Thomas Hardy, ed. Subhash Chandra, Preslige, 1999, p. 65
- [18]. W.R. Grey, "Why are Women Redundant" ? National Review, 14 (April, 1862) P.p. 434-60
- [19]. Writtenberg, opp. cit, p. 71
- [20]. Brody, M.Mary, Wollstonecraft's Sexuality and Women's Rights" in D, Spender ed, Feminist Theorists, 1983, p. 46
- [21]. Simone De Beauvoir op. cit, p. 679
- [22]. D.H. Lawrence "Study of Thomas Hardy" Phoenix – The posthumous papers of D.H. Lawrence ed. Ed. Mcdonald (London 1936) p. 414
- [23]. Card Dyhouse: "The Role of Women: from self sacrifice to self awareness", The context of English Lit: The Victorians, ed Lawrence Lerner (London: Methuen, 1978) p. 13
- [24]. Rosemarie Morgan, Women and Sexuality In The Novels of Hardy and New York; Routledge, 1988) p.62
- [25]. Rosemarie Morgan Ibid, 58
- [26]. Elaine Showalter ed. Speaking of Gender (N.York and London, Routledge, 1989, p. 4
- [27]. Margret Mead, "Sex and Temperament", The feminist papers: from Adams to De Beauvoir, ed. Alice Rossi (N.York and London Columbia Uni Press, 1973, p. 659)
- [28]. Simone de Beauvoir op cit p. 616
- [29]. Simone de Beauvoir, op. cit. p. 614
- [30]. Mary Wollstonecraft op. cit p. 63
- [31]. John Stuart Mill: The Subjection of Women ed. Ramaswamy and Mukhrjee, (Deep to and, New Delhi 1995, p. 18)
- [32]. Simone De Beauvoir:p.62
- [33]. Shakespeare; As you like it, Act I Sc II
- [34]. Simone de Beauvoir, p. 613
- [35]. Wollstonecraft. p. 15
- [36]. Ramaswamy and Mukherjee op. cit. p.1
- [37]. Elaine Showalter "The Unmanning of The Mayor of Casterbridge in D. Krammer ed. 1979, 103
- [38]. R. Tong, Feminist Thought, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.96
- [39]. Simone De Beauvoir op. cit p. 725
- [40]. Elaine Showalter.op. cit. p. 112
- [41]. E. Showalter, op. cit. p. 103
- [42].