CHAPTER TWO

THE DARK CAST AND THE DESTRUCTIVE DRIVES

The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man.

Albert Einstein

Thomas Hardy established his literary career as a true Victorian and then evolved into a typical modern novelist. The sense of modernity that Hardy owns has enabled him to describe the intricacy of modern life with all its conflicts on various fronts, ambiguities, failures, frustrations, tensions, futility, disillusion, revolt against orthodox viewpoints, social ostracism, and disharmony. He also presents the problems of alienation, rootlessness, and absurdity as inescapable conditions of modern life. Hardy is a traditionalist in the form and construction of his novels but he is truly modern in his outlook and conception. His revolt against the tyranny of worn-out conceptions, his faith in the new theories of scientific progress, his philosophical realism, his psychological study of characters in relation to environment, his serious reflections over the problems of love, sex, and marriage and his functional character of the dialogues suiting the various and shifting moods and natures of his characters show his modernity. Hardy’s subject is human life. David remarks that “Hardy regards it in its most fundamental aspect. He sees human beings less as individuals than as representatives of a species and in relation to the ultimate conditioning forces of their existence”(19).

Thomas Hardy’s searchlight percolates into human consciousness of general tragedy of existence. A careful study of Hardy’s tragedies reveals the fact that the
tragedy results in human life not only by a hostile environment in the universe but also due to an inherent flaw in character. In the world of Hardy the catastrophe that befalls a tragic hero is the result not only of forces working against him from without but also of forces within him which hasten him towards his downfall. Hardy’s great characters - Tess, Sue, Jude, Henchard, Clym, and Eustacia are all driven by forces within and without. Hardy does not present his novels with a pessimistic philosophy. He just projects a way of life in which he depicts the human predicament in a faithful manner. The plot in Hardy’s novels intensely justifies the contemporary thoughts of every individual and he has taken care to explore the sensuality in his novels. Florence Emily Hardy points out that “The real, if unavowed, purpose of fiction is to give pleasure by gratifying the love of the inhuman experience, mental or corporeal” (125).

Emerging from the group of realistic writers Thomas Hardy no doubt has struck with a unique technique of blending the care of life with human endeavour. His observation on life is a remarkable feature in Hardy’s novels where he confesses that human suffering is an unavoidable factor and the mistakes which occur in life is inevitable. Like a scientist, Hardy explores the conditions in the environment and society, for finding an answer to what he observes with an utmost affinity. Hardy’s conviction towards the predicament of life concentrates on the clash of the unseen forces. Man being a player in desperate games of perverted emotions and sensuous impulse falls a prey to thwarted relationships on account of his desire of his own choice of decisions. Institution of marriage and the question of sex have its own protocol from ancient to the modern days. Improvised culture pushes man to be clutched between the fists of the altered self and unaltered traditions of the society.
The penetrating vision of Thomas Hardy holds a strong attraction and repulsion towards the finest issues of the irresolute force on cultural distinction. He seems to be much inclined towards the submission of will to nature and society. Submission refers to facing life bravely without surrendering like a coward or it makes life futile and trivial. Life becomes futile only when an individual does not get accustomed to the comfortable moral order and when he is not in a positive spirit to aspire it, no power on earth comes for his rescue and his inner strength falls apart. Therefore an attempt is made to discuss the ignoble nature of man that exercise in futility. Evil in man is ‘innate’ and it is highly obvious in the characters of Hardy. His principal themes fate, chance, love, marriage, and its effect on the society are viewed with the responsibility of man in each criterion.

Today in this modern civilized world, every classic in British Literature can be turned towards the social pathos of modern culture giving a new transgression on the moral learning by pounding to every circumstance and incident in the novel which can be duly analysed in accord with the evil outside or inside man. Hardy’s novels are solidly built on love, acclaimed as the most complicated element in the cosmic world. Love is sensational and superficial, yet effective to dispel the tragic gloom or to relieve tension when skillfully handled. But Hardy’s characters’ love triangle with a tail have proved to be a device, devised for bringing misfortune to many in the novel.

The five novels of Thomas Hardy that are taken for study are *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). His novels deal with the most expected things in the united life and he questions about the elevated dictates of society. Apart from the major themes of Hardy: love, marriage, their experience on par
with modern culture, free-will, and the freedom of choice pose threat when done on the domination of their own evil desires and instincts. It does pose a threat of survival and they attain inexorable destruction. The ‘darkness of man’s heart’ is divulged on every choice they make. As Ludwig Schnauder quotes Philip Drew who discloses that their choice in life is inevitable “malevolence of the Immanent Will takes care that they realise that their sufferings are entailed by their own actions. Yet if they remain inert they will simply drift towards death and oblivion” (57).

Michael Millgate in *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliography Revisited* agrees that Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* bestowed on him a professional recognition and “impelled him forward into the front ranks of contemporary novelists” (148). Uncertainty and ambiguity fills the novel and the protagonist, Bathsheba Everdene’s capricious role becomes a recurring motif. The major revelation of her character initiates significant twists in her life. Bathsheba Everdene is undoubtedly one of Hardy’s remarkable characters who from a simpleton emerges into a woman of power but fails to lead a harmonious life on the account of her vanity.

Bathsheba’s struggle against realism and the love for dramatic world lead her towards flirtation and uncontrollable desire for lust and pleasures. It is an account of her physical charm that she is courted and pursued by Gabriel Oak, Boldwood, and Troy. She is first courted by Gabriel Oak, a sincere and calm lover who has a very practical outlook in understanding the realistic predicament in life. He proposes to Bathsheba and promises her to give a very balanced life but she plainly rejects telling:

> You are better off than I hardly have a penny in the world – I am staying with my aunt for my sustenance. I am better educated than you-and I
don’t love you a bit: that’s my side of the case. Now yours: you are a farmer just beginning, and you ought in common prudence, if you marry at all to marry a woman with money, who would stock a larger farm for you than you have now. (39)

Oak knows that Bathsheba “... has her fault ... And the greatest of them is ... always ... Vanity” (18). When Oak’s misfortune befalls him he says “Thank God I am not married: What would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me” (44). He knows that Bathsheba’s vanity could no longer make him an equal to her and he never courts her after his promise during the first meet that: “I’ll ask you no more” (40). He is a gentleman and keeps up his word and never discusses the past love with Bathsheba on any occasion. He analyses things and decides to get things done provided only when he can keep them under their control. He is a rational person and is able to take right decisions according to right situations. He is a stoic and virtuous person and does right things at the right time. He is not obsessed with the idea of luxury and essentials and he knows absolutely that these romantic accessories are not essential for happiness. Oak’s self-possessed and self-governed nature makes him a strong person in flesh and spirit and is able to reject the desires of the world and formulates a self-sustained life. Oak’s happiness in his life is achieved by seeing things and Marcus Aurelius comments that he is “indifferent towards the things which are indifferent” (259). He analyses things and decides to get things done provided only when he can keep them under their control.

Bathsheba Everdene, William Boldwood, and Sergeant Francis Troy stand a dark contrast to Gabriel Oak. They struggle to take decisions on the desires that can be and cannot be controlled and disciplined if they need to achieve success. Boldwood’s
material and social strength makes Bathsheba get interested in him and she sends a valentine anonymously accounting “MARRY ME” (98) inspite of Liddy commenting him as a hopeless man for a woman. He has been courted by many women yet he remains reserved, but Bathsheba’s valentine has awakened his masculinity from deep sleep. This turns Boldwood mad and is made unaware of his self-estrangement and he runs after Bathsheba and considers her to be his treasure. This bizarre behaviour and his choice taking over Bathsheba where he has less control over him causes a mental derangement. He loses his sense completely and the valentine causes a shattering effect on him. Bathsheba gets herself satisfied with the revenge that she has undertaken to send the thoughtless valentine, when Boldwood does not budge a bit to look at her in the market when she presents herself as an angel. Boldwood’s love for Bathsheba is so great that he does not like to part her for any reason. He says “My Life is a burden without you” (124). His hope and faith is completely destroyed when Sergeant Troy appears on scene with Bathsheba. Bathsheba is infatuated with Troy.

Thomas Hardy has dealt with the psychological effect of Boldwood as he has done in Jude the Obscure and Desperate Remedies. Boldwood’s insanity finds its place when Troy appears and also when sexuality, the unmitigated evil overpowers him turning him from a dignified man to a murderer. Boldwood brings down his self esteem and his self respect just for a woman who has never loved him for a minute. His violent nature is triggered when Troy marries Bathsheba and he considers Troy as his enemy: “I’ll punish him-by my soul, that will I! I’ll meet him, solider or no, and I’ll horsewhip the untimely stripling for this reckless theft of my one delight” (196). Boldwood’s end is determined by his obsession with sexuality, the only object he desires.
That marriage at first sight seldom becomes successful is clearly revealed through the marriage of Bathsheba and Troy. Bathsheba proves to be a self-reliable person until she meets Troy. She gives up her quality and falls for Troy’s physical charm. Troy succeeds in the area where Boldwood has failed in arousing Bathsheba’s sexuality. Hence she rejects Boldwood’s unattractive offer of marriage and according to Fred Reid it “involves total reduction to the domestic sphere” (116). Boldwood’s passionate nature knocks him down and Annette Federico points out that he is “handicapped placed against the win-her-at-any-cost mentality of the less patient seducer” (65). Troy faultlessly admires her and wins her on the charms of sexuality. Joe Fisher comments that Troy’s name “is purely ironic: Virgil and Homer both describe their Trojans as truthful, brave, patriotic, and confiding” (58). Susan Beegel points out the ironic representation when Troy “fears and resents Bathsheba’s proud independence of character” (111).

Attracted by the dazzling sword play, she makes quick decision of marrying him. Bathsheba’s sexual desire allows her to shelter into the idea of marriage with Troy. J. Barrie Bullen mentions that her elopement is because her “self-preoccupation and subjectivity, clouds the judgement choice” (76). The marriage is charming at the beginning but it is now too late to realise, that Troy is not the person, she wants. Hardy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* points out the mistake of Bathsheba’s marriage for she saw “Troy’s embellishments” that dominated “upon the very surface thus contrasting with homely Oak, whose defects were patent to the blindest, and whose virtues were as metals in a mine” (180).
Bathsheba is unaware of Troy’s false pretensions and his previous relationship with Fanny. An uncompromising futile cold war evolves between Troy and Bathsheba. Bathsheba feels, her marriage bond is broken and torn to pieces when Troy kisses Fanny’s coffin. She could not go away from him. She cried to him “Don’t - Don’t kiss them! O, Frank, I can’t bear it- I can’t! I love you better than she did: kiss me too, Frank-kiss me! you will, Frank, kiss me too!” (280). Bathsheba comes to know that Troy has been in love with Fanny and that she has died during childbirth. Fanny’s death makes Troy feel that Bathsheba’s appealing charm only has attracted him and rattled his life. He tries to compensate for his betrayal and deceit to Fanny by planting flowers in her grave. He hates himself and “wishes himself to be another man” (296). He suffers Fanny’s death and no longer adores the charms that “he had laughed, and sung, and poured love-trifles into a woman’s ear” (296). She has a sense of strength in her ‘free-will’ and she fights with Troy for her importance. Troy confesses that he loved Fanny to an extreme and not Bathsheba:

Ah don’t taunt me madam. This woman is more to me dead as she is . . .
If satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another thought till you came in my way . . . I deserve to live in torment for this! . . . in the sight of Heaven you are my very, very wife . . . . You are nothing to me - nothing said Troy heartlessly. A ceremony before a priest doesn’t make a marriage. I am not morally yours. (281-82)

Hence he wishes to shed his new identity and he feels he is: “a man who has spent his primal strength in journeying in one direction has not much spirit left for reversing his
course; once his flowers are swept away by the rain he does not attempt to replace them but simply gives up on the whole enterprise” (278).

Added to this sorrow, Bathsheba later learns that Troy is drowned and then she agrees to marry Boldwood. Infuriated by Troy’s return, Boldwood shoots him. Bathsheba becomes an unobtainable object through her own choice. As the consequences are tragic it has led to the death of Troy and Boldwood. The same resemblance can be seen in the novel *The Hand of Ethelberta* by Hardy. Julian unable to possess the unattainable object proclaims that:

> a woman who has once made a permanent impression upon a man cannot altogether deny him her image by denying him her company, and that by sedulously cultivating the acquaintance of this Creature of Contemplation she becomes to him almost a living soul (326).

Julian is able to keep up his adoration on Ethelberta by turning his attention towards her sister, but the consequences of separation from their ideal woman happens to disturb them greatly. Evil is encountered in the lives of the major characters in *Far from the Madding Crowd* when they choose things based on sensuality and sexuality. Richard Carpenter in comments on Bathsheba:

> The root of many of Bathsheba’s ills is her vanity, which could not allow her to accept the honesty of Oak and which throws her instead into the path of the raffish Troy. But she has sowed a more sinister seed of vanity with her treatment of farmer Boldwood, the third man in her life. (86)
Troy is a man of Victorian representative casting infidelity on Fanny Robin pointing out the evils of the self and projecting her as the victim of his evil desire. Troy’s repeated humiliation at the Christmas party forces Boldwood to murder him when he could not imagine himself to be a loser again and again.

Oak is passive, less aggressive, and is not emasculated by the failures in his life. He is careful in formulating his desire that is not beyond his external force. Evil steps in when an individual is dominated by his aspirations, desires, and emotions and when he tries to abduct the irrational objects in life by force. Boldwood, Bathsheba, and Troy have failed to keep their irrational desires under their control. They are unable to resist the temptations on sexuality. Oak is successful because he endures a peaceful life getting accustomed to every situation and Marjorie Garson points out that Oak stands out to be “a balanced and integrated figure” (28). He is able to govern his desires by helping Bathsheba as a bailiff and also warns and guides her as a friend and Lennart Björk shows Oak “as a paragon positivist hero” (94). Finally Bathsheba emerges from the unhealthy conditions of her life to regain her strength from the evil dismal world of her desires. She has reaped the reward of her vanity in the death of one man and the destruction of another. After much suffering of spirit and body, Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak are quietly married. Richard Carpenter remarks “Eternal Eve (Bathsheba) has found the fruit of this tree bitter indeed” (87). The vanity of Bathsheba, the careless immorality of Troy, the aggressive nature of Boldwood-these flaws, the results of their choice bring about the tragedy.

_The Return of the Native_ is Thomas Hardy’s challenging and controversial novel that cites the bold and controversial views on marriage and Lance St. John Butler
declares this as a conflict between “the possible and the actual” (7). Extramarital relationships, marriage breakdown and unfulfilled desires are the main probing questions dealt within the novel. Like Bathsheba, Eustacia is an independent woman who likes to be admired but is confronted by the public because of her conduct and aggressive nature. She fails in her existence because of her inability to compromise on her aim and desires. She goes to an extent of giving away her life when she is denied of her long aimed aspirations. Hardy’s invention of the Egdon Heath is an unforgettable setting in all of Hardy’s novels. It plays the role of a character itself.

Eustacia Vye the heroine is frustrated with the Egdon Heath and she abandons her love for Wildeve due to her inability to stay and spend her life in the Heath. Richard Carpenter says: “She is a romantic whose hatred of the Heath and whose visions of a glamorous life in Paris constitute an obsession” (94). She is fascinated by the industrialised and the shimmering city life. The Heath is the gigantic presentation of a living creature that connects and embraces the activities of all the characters in the novel. Thomas Hardy has noted that the Heath “was found to be the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster” (13).

The Heath visualises the depth of Eustacia’s dislike of the heath that delves deeper into her character showing the complexity in her psyche. The novel is about the problem of the tragic characters failing to understand the needs of each other and hoping that nature or society will satisfy what they need. Self-determination, sensual, and sexual desire predominate in every decision she takes in her life. Sengupta says: “Eustacia’s sensuous nature is incapable of thought. Her every act is the instant product of
impetuous desire” (38). But she is vigilant in finding an excuse to escape the Egdon Heath and L.W. Deen describes this as: “a dissatisfaction so thorough going amounts to a denial of life itself” (211). Hardy’s characters suffer from emotional patches and maladjustment. Eustacia’s failure in accepting the change in her life in accord with the society prevents her from seeing the new insights of life. She possesses the quality of Bathsheba’s vanity but to add more she is a lazy day dreamer and does not mix with people.

*The Return of the Native* like Thomas Hardy’s other novels shows the weaknesses of the characters that lead to their fall. Again the sexual preoccupations thrusting to take emotional decisions are again tentatively discussed. Rosemary Sumner sums up Howe’s view on *The Return of the Native* as “a new kind of sexuality, neurotically willful but also perversely exciting makes its appearance” (100). The glimpses of Eustacia’s impact are also continued in *Jude the Obscure*. Eustacia’s aversion towards the Heath sends her into a world of suppression and longs for happiness and cries for it. She searches it where she has lost it. She has lost harmony with her mental consciousness and she does not try to cope with the elemental urges of nature. To her:

> Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her. (73)

Eustacia could not get herself settled in the Heath. She considers love to be the vehicle that would take her to the world that she wants. Irving Howe remarks “She is a young
goddess of sensuality” (64). Joan Perkin proclaims that Eustacia considers Clym Yeobright to be her choice and chooses him hoping she could “maintain the social status” and “to enjoy a life of comfort” (60). She longs for the material happiness and at every incident she finds a way to get unfulfilled dreams fulfilled. Her life is a mysterious happening for she does not seem to be happy anytime of her life. She is rebellious and demanding and her life has been led into a realm of isolation. The isolation that she suffers as a ‘Queen of Night’ commences an infinite string of indifferences in her behaviour. She is utterly confused with her decisions. She falls in love with Clym. Now she is relieved of Wildeve when he marries Thomasin. Her loneliness is the cause of her depression and she murmurs always to cast it away. The conversation of Clym and Eustacia conveys it: “What depressed you? Life! That’s a cause of depression a good many have to put up with” (150).

Eustacia’s longing to get into the world she wishes for makes the readers feel that she has distorted visions towards her life. Michael Millgate in Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist comments that Eustacia is highly depressed and frustrated when she is denied “of her femininity and of her social ambitions; her own appalled sense of being trapped in a hostile environment, with no alternative courses, action, no prospect of future amelioration” (134). Dreams get shattered when Clym refuses to go to Paris and stays at Egdon to study in order to open a school. Against the wish of his family, he decides to provide his people the “knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence” (176) rather than “to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use. I have come home . . . . I shall keep a
school’ (175). Clym like the other Hardy’s heroes Jude Fawley and Michael Henchard is a liable prey to the sexual domination and meet fatal destruction.

Richard Carpenter remarks: “Clym’s problem is quiet as profound as Eustacia’s but it is rooted in a different source: his obsession with the idealistic course of life and he is perfervid attachment to his mother” (95). He partly resembles Oak in rejecting material luxury but it is spiritual growth that he develops during his stay at Egdon but his “social effort is only likely to be misunderstood by a class to which social effort has become a stale matter” (177). His feeling towards his people gets shattered when his sacrifice is not well recognised. He does not get positive response on establishing the school.

Apart from her dreams Eustacia feels that Clym has made a bad bargain in her life. She does not like Clym’s plan of becoming a teacher and later as a furze-cutter due to his physical break down. Richard Carpenter comments: “Clym’s blindness is both a logical and natural result of his lack of common sense and it is symbolic of his deeper spiritual blindness wherein he cannot see the nature of his illness” (95). She feels that she has been made a laughing stock in front of Wildeve. Adding to that her urge for sexuality is not fulfilled and her stay at Egdon Heath makes her mentally ill. She confronts Clym by showering angry words as “O, you are too relentless - there's a limit to the cruelty of savages! I have held out long - but you crush me down. I beg for mercy - I cannot bear this any longer - it is inhuman to go further with this!”(330). It is because of her illusion for the love of glamorous city life that she depends on Clym and accepts the life. She hopes that Clym would be alright and when she confirms that Clym can never be amended she turns her desire to get away from the relationship. Her erotic
passions are not satisfied by Clym, to fulfil it she needs a vulpine person wrapped in a golden halo of the same intensity of feelings that she possesses. Rosemarie Morgan comments on the languid love of Eustacia compared with Bathsheba:

Eustacia’s tense and frustrated sexuality is also far removed from Bathsheba’s self-delighting, auto-erotic passion, but it is no less expressive, no less palpable, no less physical . . . the poetic device points to the interactive, reciprocal potential in the sexual relationship and by, extension, to the equal force of Eustacia’s desire. (60)

Unlike Bathsheba, Eustacia decides to lead a life free from the disappointment of soul and mind for she does not feel that she is travelling towards the troubled world. She could not adjust because “the situation seemed such a mockery of her hopes that death appeared the only door of relief if the satire of Heaven should go much further” (259) but is later saved by Charley. Clym and Diggory Venn are realistic people who continue to love and help Eustacia and Thomasin even when they are rejected at extreme conditions. Clym always tries to make her happy but he fails to understand the expectations of Eustacia. He is warned by his mother against marrying Eustacia on knowing her affair with Wildeve. She is quite jealous of her in taking her priceless son away on account of her charms. Sengupta comments: “Mrs. Yeobright is a string portraiture of a possessive mother triumph of psychological portraiture” (46). She knows that her son’s love will not be everlasting if he does not take up his diamond business. She is equally upset when she comes to know that her son’s life is in danger. She goes in for rescue but gets herself killed by a viper.
Clym is the representation of the modern world getting into the clutch between the two worlds. At every attempt he feels that she would be alright. His patience ends when he learns the reason for the death of his mother, he accuses Eustacia of her relationship with Wildeve. Eustacia’s guilt overcomes her normal life and she wanders around the Heath thinking that she is the reason for the cause for the death of Mrs. Yeobright. Her hatred for Heath chases her to commit terrible mistakes of acting very slyly towards committing adultery. All the characters of Hardy suffer from the sense of guilt that chases their life to a terrific end. Clym also thinks that he is also responsible for the death of his mother when he hears from Johnny “she said I was to say that I had seed her, and she was a broken hearted woman and cast off by her son” (305).

Always a fight for survival predominates in the life of Eustacia and Thomasin. One fights for the dreamy world to come true and the other wants to maintain her life from being abducted by another woman. It is Eustacia’s own desire and decision that leads to her fall. She is a woman who does not seem to have supporters in her life other than Wildeve. Wildeve is a man of conflicting emotions. His dubious nature and his inability to marry Eustacia is a scar in his life. His life with Thomasin looks like a mechanised machine where he concentrates his interest on Eustacia. Sengupta remarks: “Wildeve is a man of romantic trait- traits with potentiality for evil” (49). He also feels guilty of not reciprocating true love to Thomasin but the evil in him curbs his inner conscience and he assures Eustacia and promises her to give the Parisian life that she waits for. The doors are not opened to Mrs. Yeobright only because of the secret meeting of Wildeve and Eustacia at her home. Eustacia and Wildeve decide to elope destroying the life of Thomasin and Clym but they fail to recognise the importance of the nuptial
bond. She decides to throw it off when she is not given what she has expected and wanted.

Thomas Hardy has clearly portrayed the disappearance of integrity in rural England. Fleeing the Heath symbolises the escape to the modern world and the ache of modernism delves deep into the character of Eustacia. Hardy has done a clear study on the innate evil in man. Fate and circumstances are present in this novel: Clym’s letter to Eustacia arriving late, the arrival of Mrs.Yeobright, Clym’s physical destruction are the primary flaws of nature but the decisions taken by Eustacia at all times affect the people around her. The selfish motive in her shows the discontent due to civilization which is self-destructive. Each of the character’s decision leads to self destruction like the drowning of Eustacia and Wildeve or Clym ruining his own life in marrying Eustacia and causing dissension towards his mother. Sengupta says: “Eustacia’s tragedy emanates not only from the flaws of her own character, it is bound up with those of Clym and his mother. For there is a vein of self destroying impulse that runs through both Clym and his mother” (40).

He totally becomes a transformed person and directs himself towards preaching on the account of the responsibility he takes for Eustacia’s death. Human psyche demands more than what it gets, when it does not reach the saturated point it does not prolong in normal condition. Eustacia fails to respect the decision that she has taken and she floats in a dubious mind. She looks into an infinite life failing to visualise reality. She could not accept that she is losing her identity in the Heath and she wants to save it. She hopes for retrieving it after her marriage. But it brings before their eyes, their mistakes and deficiencies. Eustacia’s irrational sensuality, Clym’s passivity and
Wildeve’s sexuality, born of their choices lead to their fatal end. When they fail to identify and rectify it, the desirable moral reformation is not consummated at the end. Pride and deceit end in vain.

Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge-The Life and Death of a Man of Character* is an attempt to deal with the improbabilities of character of Michael Henchard in detail. Michael Millgate in *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* proclaims that Hardy emphasises that the fall of Henchard is derived “directly from his own actions or that these proceed in turn from his whole personality” (227). Being a man of extremes, his impulsive nature, his rash decisions, possessiveness towards his own people, and the power as the Mayor of the town emphasises the power of discourse and determines his rise and fall as a man of character. There are passionate women and impulsive men in Hardy’s novels. But Hardy’s portrayal of Michael Henchard is a remarkable one. Richard Carpenter calls Michael Henchard: “A great tragic figure: dynamic, forceful, and passionate in his love and hatred. Essentially, he is a man who means well, but is constantly driven by his impulsive nature into deeds that bring disastrous results” (104). Henchard’s past transgressions in life make him to face a tragic decline in the town where he has once passed through a ridge of success and honour. Embittered and burdened with his responsibilities he sells his wife and daughter to a sailor to achieve success and money. He regrets his acts and takes a vow on abstinence from alcohol for twenty one years. He considers work and success as the main determinants of his life and reframes himself as a self-disciplined person for productive purposes. He becomes a wealthy corn merchant in a span of twenty years and is elected the Mayor of Casterbridge and becomes “a pillar of the town” (37). He is “the
powerfullest member of the town-council, and quite a principal man in the country round besides” (37) and his greatness lies “in one talent of energy to create a position of affluence out of absolutely nothing” (220).

Rising to a higher status in the society, Henchard is devoid of an equal competitor and hence he is in short of business tactics, rationality and emotional balance where Farfrae fares well. Henchard is preoccupied with the conflicting thoughts of his scandalous auction which provides profound implication on losing his social status. It is further weakened when he discloses his frivolous past to Farfrae out of an emotional attachment: “Henchard's somewhat lonely life he evidently found the young man as desirable for comradeship as he was useful for consultations” (94). His disclosure of his past to Farfrae is because he has segregated his emotional feelings towards his relations and ultimately he seeks them. He is desperately in need of someone to share his burden, and his insufficiency is exposed when he chooses Farfrae to share his past about Lucetta and his wife Susan in a very short span of time. He later feels for his mistake and tells Farfrae “Ah - I know why! I've told ye the secret of my life - fool that I was to do't - and you take advantage of me!”(103). The life with Newson has been better for Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. He has been a wonderful personality with a good understanding nature. When she comes to Falmouth, it is then disclosed that Susan is still in love with Henchard where she “ridiculed her grave acceptance of her position” (32).

Henchard does not share an intense emotional bond with the two women whom he meets in his life. He is a masterful coercive individual who is said to possess the “haughty indifference to the society of womankind and his silent avoidance of converse with the sex” (87). His abandoning of females in his life instigates a sudden attachment
to Farfrae. Later he is happy to be a husband to Susan and a father to Elizabeth-Jane. He marries Susan under Farfrae’s guidance and he feels that a great void in his life is replaced by the return of his family. Henchard thinks of the future of his daughter Elizabeth-Jane and hopes to lead a life with her to be his comfort in the rest of his life. Hardy writes “In truth, a great change comes over him with regard to Elizabeth-Jane, and he is developing the dream of a future lit by her filial presence, as though that way alone could happiness lie” (285). He tries to make amends for his mistake and likes to redefine himself as a respectable man in the society and marries Susan.

Henchard’s loveless marriage with Susan is to suppress his past secret; and to keep up his position as a Mayor, for his reputation lies in his lonely widowhood and to avoid being shamed by his past act. But Susan deceives Henchard by telling him that Elizabeth- Jane is his daughter and she hides the fact that Elizabeth-Jane is Newson’s daughter who bears the same name of Henchard’s daughter who is dead after Henchard’s separation from his family. He could not accept the identity of Elizabeth-Jane as Newson’s daughter and feels humiliated. He decides not to tell her the truth because he could not accept the truth. His attachment towards Elizabeth-Jane declines when he learns about her identity from Susan’s letter. His cold treatment towards her makes her move away from Henchard and he is left alone to suffer with his dream getting shattered:

The regard he had lately acquired for Elizabeth, the new-sprung hope of his loneliness that she would be to him a daughter of whom he could feel as proud as of the actual daughter she still believed herself to be, had been stimulated by the unexpected coming of Newson to a greedy
exclusiveness in relation to her; so that the sudden prospect of her loss had caused him to speak mad lies like a child, in pure mockery of consequences. (288)

When Henchard leaves Lucetta and Farfrae drafts a letter on behalf of him in explaining the need for Henchard to marry Susan. His irrational behaviour is brought into flash light when he grows jealous of Farfrae’s popularity in the public. Henchard derives a personality of imposing structure of power over Farfrae and defines himself superior in age, financial, and social status. He no longer considers Farfrae his friend when he never succumbs to his wishes. The devastation of Henchard starts when he fires Farfrae and becomes a cause of establishing Farfrae as a successful business man in town. Farfrae becomes a threat to Henchard’s existence when he learns that Henchard is no longer the admired man in the town. Joanna Devereux points out that Lucetta’s marriage with Farfrae and his success in power and business “suggests a profound loss of power and control” over Henchard and he does not possess “any hope for future regeneration” (62).

Henchard’s pride gets accumulated when he is considered as a source of inspiration and a good leader in commerce and trade. Hardy stresses on the fall of Henchard when he fails to have self control over himself on certain important situations. The quality of a multidimensional character is to have As Karl R. Frederick says: “something within they must control. When control, nevertheless, becomes impossible, they commit actions which directly or indirectly injure others while also laying the groundwork for their own destruction” (198). He does not try to repair his faults but tries to conceal his past to avoid it to become increasingly irksome.
Henchard considers Farfrae as his rival and he could not exactly tolerate that he is losing everything to him. His intolerance is obvious when he decides not to give up his business to him. His self-evasive decision forces him to take heavy investment on his grain business which fetches him heavy loss and it is rumoured soon after, that much of the real property as well as vast stores of produce, which had stood in Henchard’s name in the town and neighbourhood, are now actually the possessions of his bankers. His downfall really overtakes him when he presides as a magistrate over the case of a disorderly woman, and the woman turns out to be the furmity woman who narrates to the court about the sale of Henchard’s wife several years ago. He loses his self-esteem in the public and he thinks that he is nothing more to anyone. He admits his mistake but he could not digest that the most respectable person of the town is doomed because of his own weakness and foolish acts. Sengupta sees “that Henchard’s character like Lear’s is of heroic proportions although so moulded that the vast energies are dissipated in foolish acts of pride and vanity, in short in his own destruction” (71).

Henchard’s hatred towards Farfrae reaches the peak when he sings Psalm 109 and drinks at the Three Mariners getting into the clutches of evil once again. This scene reminds one about the sale of his wife and the renewing of the past evil act is again a self destruction, determining his downfall. “The flush upon his face proclaimed at once that the vow of twenty-one years had lapsed, and the era of recklessness begun anew” (229).

Henchard could not digest Elizabeth-Jane’s and Lucetta’s attraction for Farfrae. Henchard tries to repair his status by marrying Lucetta, a woman of affluence which would help him to reconstruct himself as an honourable person in the town. He tries to establish a relationship with Lucetta through matrimony and pleases her. But she refrains
from seeing him and marries Farfrae. This makes Henchard feel that he is deprived of power wherever he moves. He blames Farfrae for his failure and goes to an extent of making an attempt on Farfrae by pushing him off from a hay loft. He then stops Farfrae from moving out of town and he works under him as a common man. He threatens Lucetta of revealing the past to the public that “unless you give me your promise this very night to be my wife, before a witness, I’ll reveal our intimacy - in common fairness to other men!” (194). Henchard later feels for his antagonism towards Lucetta and returns the letters drawn by Lucetta for Henchard and he tells himself, “Such a woman was very small deer to hunt; he no longer envied Farfrae his bargain”(248) and no longer considered Farfrae his enemy. The past of Lucetta and Henchard is revealed to the people of town and the signal of the skimmington causes social downfall of Lucetta and she suffers opprobrium. The shame and guilt leads her to miscarriage and she dies.

R. G. Cox points out that the “tragic career of passionate sin, bitter penitence, and rude reparation” (146) claims Henchard to be a fallen hero. Henchard’s main flaw is that he tries to escape from facing realities of life and his will against the society is his tragic flaw. Robert Kiely in her essay remarks: “Henchard’s sufferings stem mainly from a useless and eventually harmful effort to silence or conceal unalterable realities. But nature will not have it that way, nor will Hardy” (199).

When Newson finds he is deceived, he reveals himself to be Elizabeth-Jane’s father. Then Henchard moves secretly out of Casterbridge and once again turns out to be a hay trusser. “I-Cain- go alone as I deserve - an outcast and a vagabond. But my punishment is not greater than I can bear! He sternly subdued his anguish, shouldered his basket, and went on” (307). His state of hopelessness has weakened him and he
considers his suffering to be his punishment. He hates himself as Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Where Henchard falters Farfrae prospers. Farfrae emerges as an assertive and self-confident man but not aggressive as Henchard. He does not dominate and impose his power on others on any situations. He adapts himself into grave situations and has his own emotional limitations.

Henchard’s existential failing can never estimate Henchard inferior to Farfrae. Henchard tries to be a super-imposed man as he lacks moderation. Farfrae succeeds as he is flexible and adapts to well defined situations. Henchard fails because of his rigidity and stubborn nature in imposing his ideas and will at all times. His inadaptability and headstrong nature cripples his life and is unable to formulate his own way of survival. Hence he moves away from the manmade structures of society and decides his death to be unknown to the people of his town. This last will enumerate his feeling towards his humiliation in life. As the last line of the novel concludes “happiness [is] but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain” (327) ensures that Henchard’s tragic end is his flaw. The suffering is because of their failure to look what they truly are.

*Tess of the d’Urbervilles* highly reflects what Thomas Hardy has visualised in England during his childhood days. He was upset over the degradation of culture that was extremely essential to keep up women’s chastity and purity. It is a bold attempt by Hardy to show what the people of those days thought and felt. Hardy mostly deals with the people of the rural middle class and has greatly differentiated the upper class and their treacherous behaviour that they undertake to keep up their social status in the society. Tess is from a family of faded past glory where John Durbeyfield’s noble lineage bestows on him an illusion and he acquires false pride and takes to drinking. His
idleness and leisure loving nature make him lead an imaginative aristocratic life. The effect of drinking is also well portrayed by giving a picture of Tess’ irresponsible parents forcing her to undertake the responsibility of her parents.

Tess’ dreams get shattered on the death of the horse Prince and feeling responsible, she takes up a job at the d’Urberville household. Alec d’Urberville tries to attract her at every moment and plunges her into despair by allowing her to carry the stigma of loss of self respect throughout her life. The confusion and ambivalence in her mind thrust her to trust him even though she hates him. Hardy proclaims that Alec’s glamour attracts the innocent Tess where she fails to feel the danger skulking in men. Hardy’s men are portrayed as evil and they wreck the lives of female protagonists.

Tess innocently does not hold divergent opinions on Alec and she abandons the plan of going home and she underestimates the awaiting danger that her dreamy mind fails to take notice of. He throws lot of appreciation on Tess and it is obvious when he pushes strawberry forcefully into her mouth. He flatters her in every way and he closely resembles Troy, when he associates his interest with sensuality and not love. Though she is unyielding to his wish ‘The Chase’ scene clearly shows how Hardy has portrayed Tess as a victim of her own impulses. Tess’ pride makes her go away from the ecstasy group when she propounds great laughter and the jealousy in the team makes her indignant and ashamed. She no longer minds the loneliness of the way and the lateness of the hour; her one object is to get away from the whole crew as soon as possible. She accepts Alec’s invitation with: “fear and indignation [and considering] a “triumph over them . . . she abandoned herself to her impulse . . . . The pair was speeding away into the distant gray by the time that the contentious revellers became aware of what had happened” (79).
The event has been such, like the other important matters like execution of Tess and the birth of Sorrow. The transformation of Tess into a maiden no more is not an end but just a beginning. Tess being uneducated and an epitome of innocence, feels guilty of her weakness, failing to avert an ambivalent situation with a man who is both attractive and repellent to her. Tess is an intelligent girl to understand the situation of the problem that she is facing now. She realises that the ‘physical’ self has played an important role rather than that of the mind or soul in ‘The Chase’ scene and hence she does not like to stay at Trantridge poultry farm or to marry Alec. She is angry that her innocence has been used as a weapon to destroy her virginity. She questions her mother: “Why didn’t you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn’t you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o’ leaning in that way, and you did not help me!” (98).

She hates herself for not knowing the dangers in the world. Her innocence becomes her weakness. When she is assaulted on her weakness her pride overshadows in accepting the essence in reality of life. She knows well that she would get a stable sophisticated life but she firmly takes the decision to face the consequences and she rejects the proposal of marriage. She tells Alec, “If I had gone for love o’ you, if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now! My eyes were dazed by you for a little and that was all” (91).

Tess wants to be independent and does not wish to serve a person who made her a victim of what she was lagging in. It is her decision to come back home and face a weird situation that the society does not approve of. The whispers she hears around her disables her to go to church. She looks into herself as a “figure of guilt intruding into the
haunts of Innocence” (101). The guilt overcomes her confidence and she makes herself unhappy and miserable. She boldly decides to face the convention bound Victorian society when she bears a child without getting married. Tess could have thought about the offence against the society on bearing a fatherless child. But she stays calm unmindful of the profound views of the society and it is clearly obvious in baptising her own child when the child is rejected. A sense of regeneration happens and she tries to get over her memories of the past and she has as Hardy says:

changed from simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice her soul [was] that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize . . . . To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it. (116)

Thomas Hardy has confirmed Tess to be the woman of that modern age who does not sit and cry for the past but like a Phoenix, she rejuvenates her energy and goes to another stage. Hardy has rightly pointed out that “Once victim always victim” (381). She meets Angel whom she sees as an angel who is inversely proportional to that of Alec an embodiment of evil to her.

Tess’ relationship with Angel at the Talbothays seems to be a turnover in her life after the harrowing experiences in her past. The decency of Angel in respecting the moral values in life encourages her to have more interest in him. Hardy has brought out the sequence of love between Angel and Tess in a very delicate manner that no expectation lies between them. All that they want is true love. Sexuality once again plays its part when Angel views Tess as a “dazzlingly fair dairymaid” (154) in the
Talbothays. To Richard Carpenter: “Tess is more vitally alive; specifically she is more female, more sexual, and more passionate. In combination with her innocence, her gentleness, and her worshipful loyalty this sexuality makes her indeed a memorable character” (129).

Angel Clare is moved by the beauty of Tess and he says: “What a fresh and a virginal daughter of nature that milkmaid is! He said to himself”(142). Angel’s persistence overcomes her sorrow and it shakes her firm decision of not getting married to anyone. Though she loves him she rejects his proposal but Angel is positive because of the assurance that he read in her eyes. Tess not only considers Angel as an intelligent but as a man of virtues. She wins interest in Angel’s eyes and she feels. “There was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Angel . . . he was all that goodness could be . . . she saw something immortal before her” (221).

She likes to be a dazzling figure for Angel but she curbs herself due to what befell her in the past. She tries to tell her past to Angel but she fails. She does not realise the complicating nature of Angel. Ellen Lew Sprechman comments that Angel “is a young man of uncertain philosophies” (93). Right from the beginning and till her wedding night she remains in a world of confusion whether to confess her past or not. Her innocence prompts her to tell what has happened to her in the past. It is her freedom to tell for she likes to live a life free from the tortures of mind and soul because for Tess, it is just a story that is no longer present. It is a mere narration of events belonging permanently to the past. To Angel, the story is not present in its substance, but its effect, would destroy the Tess he loved.
During initial meetings with Tess, Angel’s attraction is more spiritual than brutal. He does not think her in terms of flesh and his love for her is more ethereal. Later he is obsessed with her and is “burdened inwardly by a waxing fervour of passion” (172). His infatuation makes him more irresistible and cannot wait for “his heart had outrun his judgement” (176). His craving for her flesh overpowers him and his impulses are out of his control. Without considering her status and driven by a heavy haul of impulse he finds logical reasons to possess her. He is a disciplined man of the society but he becomes an assertive person in carrying out his idea and forces Tess to plunge to his desire not giving a chance to explain her status. Angel confesses the impact that she has created on him, “I can’t read, or play, I want to know . . . that you will some day be mine” (203). He thinks her to be an unpossessed woman an epitome of purity and an untainted woman. That Tess’ fatal confession shows up Angel’s inability to accept the hymen absent girl is a hard truth.

Thomas Hardy once again points out the war between the flesh and spirit that torments Angel Clare and Rosemary Sumner makes it more clear that: “he needs her to be the embodiment of the purity which he feels he has lost” (137). He loves the innocent flawless nature in her but he could not accept the fact that she has been a tainted one. Angel avoids Tess on the fear that threatens his masculinity of having sexual comparison with his rival Alec. He formulates himself to be a cruel and stubborn man and is no longer bound with the passion of love. It is a matter of getting known that Angel is worried of. His genuine love remains the same but he could not give away his cultural self. Besieged by guilt of unworthiness on her wedding day her confrontation has paved way for her own tragedy. It cannot be erased nor can be repaired. She is doomed once
again of her weakness. Tess at the altar of marriage wants to be punished. The choice of marriage has a profound implication for the self. He fails to see the spiritual form of Tess. He considers that purity of spirit emerges from the physical nature. The marriage vows are broken and Tess readily accepts and submits to Angel’s decision for she considers him to be her judge who punishes her for her unworthiness in body and soul. She accepts that her impurity in her physical body does not allow her to be his dear wife.

Tess decides to stay at Flintcomb-Ash. She is basically a girl of illusion and dream putting happiness and sorrow to an extreme. Here at Flintcomb-Ash she has to rely on hard work. Her self-sacrifice that she does for the sake of her family and Angel makes her a woman of selfless attitude. She loses faith in herself and in the nature around her. She undergoes great hardship. Simon Gatrell observes:

... the many tensions in her character that lead her to the gallows. The most obvious of those between humility and pride, and between innocence and sensuality but Hardy also makes it clear that there is also a conflict within Tess between acquired conventional belief and instinctive independence of mind. (99)

The harshness of the weather and the infertile field depicts the hard life that Tess is experiencing. She undertakes all the hardships for she optimistically holds on the view that she would be united with Angel one day. Alec tries to overcome her thoughts by persuading her by tricks and lies to come with him. He tries to hypnotise her and tells her to leave her husband forever. Tess who assumes the role of a caretaker for her family fights against the system of the conventional society. The incidents during her motherhood have affected her gravely that she submits herself to Alec for the second
time when she feels that she has been treated by Angel in a harsh manner. Yet she could not give away the dreams that she has treasured in her mind to happen in future. Tess values her relationship with Angel but she submits to Alec for the sake of her family. She destroys her dreams and it is she who has taken the decision against her will.

Angel’s love for Tess is felt when he reads Tess’ letters and his self-love is shattered and he goes immediately to meet her. The return of Angel and her inability to accept being a “fugitive in a dream” (434) forces her to murder Alec. She could not think of losing Angel again. The murder clearly illustrates of the waiting opportunity to avenge Alec. Tess’ failure in looking into the past to make a better future is the prime flaw in her. Tess’ failures are caused by her own failings. Her submissive nature and indecisiveness is her primal flaw. Her passivity during the seduction and her submission to Angel in punishing herself define her flaw. It is her selfless attitude and the decision of giving punishment to herself is the cause of her misery. The destructive character of the protagonists arises from within and not from the outside. The couple enjoys a short span of reunion and she accepts the punishment of the social law.

*Jude the Obscure* is yet another milestone in defining the ways of an individual. It is the grimmest of Hardy’s tragedies. It deals with the modern themes of failure, frustration, disharmony, and isolation as inescapable conditions of life. In the works of Richard Carpenter: “The last novel Hardy wrote is also the most modern, turning away as it does from agricultural setting and pastoral with to a restless world of cities and psychological insecurities” (138). It is a tragedy of unfulfilled aims. Marjorie Garson comments on Jude’s search as: “the presence of signified, a fixed meaning in life” (153). Jude is also a victim to his impulses. Hardy has aggressively discussed the issues of
love, marriage and sex in an outraging manner. Feeling that he is in an age that needed some repair and reform on the socialistic conventional views of the society Hardy, has written this novel highlighting the modern world’s psychological insecurities and the harsh city life. This novel has been Hardy’s new attempt of discussing issues in a striking manner as Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* who owes so much to Hardy in expressing the ideas of sexual natures of man and woman related with marriage.

The hero of the story is Jude Fawley, a south-wessex villager. The novel is about the suffering of a man who thinks himself worthless and useless since the drowning of his mother and death of his father. Being made an orphan he is considered to be the same to his Aunt Drusilla and later to Arabella and Sue. The sympathy towards his unsecured life is reflected when he feels mercy for a set of birds. It highlights his sickening feeling towards creatures that treat cruelly another. The criticism is that Jude and Sue do not have a family to support them and they hence do not know the importance of family. Jude has intellectual aspirations but they are never fulfilled because of a sensuous temperament and the play of circumstances. Jude wants to be a scholar but he is entangled in a love affair with Arabella, “a mere female animal” (46) and is compelled to marry her. She leaves him and he starts his studies again and wants to become a priest. But this time he falls in love with his cousin, Sue a lively intelligent young school teacher. But she marries an elderly school master Phillotson. Disappointed, bitter and unhappy, Jude takes to drinking and dies miserably.

One of Jude’s great ambitions in life is to become a scholar. Another important dream of his life is to become a Reverend Father in the church. All his dreams are shattered by two women of opposite nature: the sensuous Arabella and the fastidious
Sue. Jude is entangled in a love affair with Arabella because of his sensuous temperament and he is also entrapped into marrying her. A woman of vulgar designs, Arabella tricks Jude into a marriage by falsely asserting that she is pregnant. Arabella frustrates his efforts to make himself a scholar. Jude wryly comments: “It is a complete smashing up of my plans . . . Dreams about books and degrees and impossible scholarships and all that” (70). Arabella overwhelms him with her physical charms and voluptuousness and Jude just cannot resist it. In the words of Sengupta: “Arabella is the gross symbol of sex in contradistinction to Sue who is cold and sexless. In the form of Arabella, the power of sex runs through the whole book from her first deliberate seduction of a grave and artistic youth . . . to Jude’s futile attempt at suicide” (167).

He has completely forgotten his studies. His weakness for a woman proves to be a hindrance to his academic progress. Soon Jude finds that there is no argument between their tastes and priorities and Arabella leaves him on the pretext of visiting her parents Jude is shocked. Sengupta again remarks “With such divergent natures, Jude the daydreamer Arabella, the realist the marriage goes to the rocks very soon” (149). It does not take Jude long to realise that: “their lives were ruined, by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life - long comradeship tolerable”(85).

Jude resumes his studies. But he now falls in love with his cousin Sue Bridehead, an intelligent young school teacher. Though he is disappointed in his love affair with Arabella, he is not cautious in his approach to women. He develops intimate relationship with the lovely Sue. That is because of his deep seated desire for sexual and emotional
relationship with a lady. Though he has come to pursue the path of learning, his susceptibility to women remains. Hardy himself admits it when he calls him “a ridiculously affectionate fellow” (105). His desire to become a priest becomes thwarted in the same manner as his aspiration to become a scholar. The human impulse is more powerful in him than the divine one. Sue marries an elderly schoolmaster, Phillotson.

But Jude loves her secretly. Disappointed in her marriage with Phillotson, Sue comes back to Jude. Jude marries her without any pricks of conscience. Sue with her typical feminine intuition is able to see through Jude’s weaknesses of character: “You are Joseph the dreamer of dreams, Dear Jude, And a Tragic Don Quixote, and sometimes you are St. Stephen who, while they were stoning him who would see heaven opened! Oh. My poor friend and comrade, you will suffer yet” (254).

Jude pursues Sue both before and after her marriage with Phillotson. There is a constant internal warfare between flesh and spirit. His living with Sue is not approved by society. The death of their children causes a moral setback in Sue and she goes back to her former husband Phillotson. Jude’s second marriage with Sue is broken. He has been very depressed after losing Sue. But this depression has not enabled him to develop a philosophical detachment. On the contrary he once again allows himself to be trapped by the clever Arabella and remarries her under the adverse influence of liquor. But he is not able to derive any kind of happiness and deserted by Sue, he becomes broken hearted and sick. In spite of his illness, he desires to see Sue for the last time and travels to Marygreen and meets her in the church. His health further deteriorates and Arabella too deserts him. She is so heartless that she leaves him alone at home and Jude dies uncared
for. His sensuality is responsible for his failure in realising his aims. Jude falls victim to his own sensuality. In the words of Richard Carpenter:

‘Jude’s problems, has he himself admits are not entirely of society’s making, just as his story is not entirely a social tract. His character accounts for the bulk of his difficulties and provides the motive force for the events in the novel . . . ’ he continues to say, ‘ . . . he is pulled this way and that by desires, weaknesses and misfortunes until he comes to be like a bewildered bear in the pit of his own emotion’. (143-45)

He admits that his weakness for women and addiction to liquor, actions of his own choice are responsible for his ruin. His first aspiration for academic pursuits is spoiled by Arabella and his second aspiration for priesthood is destroyed by Sue. His sensual temperament is mainly responsible for his fall. In a war between flesh and spirit, the cravings of the flesh gains mastery over him and he forgets his literary pursuits. Jude cannot subdue the flame of passion kindled in his heart by Arabella and Sue. Even after Arabella has left him, he does not retrace his steps. Again he falls in love with Sue and finds fresh attractions in her. He cannot control the intensity of his sexual passions and so his failure and frustration could not be prevented. Sengupta says that “Jude the Obscure is a dual tragedy. It is Jude’s tragedy as well as Sue’s” (157). Sengupta quotes Albert Gueard and points out that: “Sue combines with her sexlessness and even repugnance to the gross sexual act, a very strong impulse to arouse sexual desire in men” (157).

Of course Jude is aware of his faults. Self-knowledge comes to him. Self-realisation dawns on him:
I’m in a chaos of principles - grouping in the dark-acting by instinct and not after example . . . I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations, which do me and nobody else any harm and actually give pleasure to those I love best. (402)

It is seen that Hardy lays the blame on Jude’s innate weakness of character. Jude himself attributes his failures to his impulses, affections, vices, and inclinations. But he never takes any effort to control his impulses. He never acts to change his path. He continues to be a dreamer and achieves nothing. Albert Gueard rightly maintains that Jude the Obscure is not tragic. When Sue goes back to Philloston, Jude cries out “you know what a weak fellow I am. My two Arch enemies you know my weakness for woman kind and my impulse to strong liquor. Don’t abandon me to them Sue, to save your soul only” (435). Here once again is the very core of Jude’s tragedy – a tragedy stemming from the weakness of characters and decision that go amiss. It is the pitiable cry of a weak man, seeking the help of a woman to save his soul too.

A character who goes out to his doom without struggling against the odds of life or without resisting the forces of evil which bring about his ruin may be pathetic but cannot be tragic. It is the heroic struggle of Hardy’s protagonists which endow them with a majesty and grandeur. There is not much of a heroic struggle in Jude’s life if there was to be a struggle, he should not have remarried Arabella and again he should have stayed on with Sue and defied the hostile society. He has no rational strength to put up a brave fight. In the battle for life, the weak man drops out. That is the case of Jude, he has been an utter failure in life: both in ambition and in love and Tim Dolin alludes: “it is really only ever the material and subsisting life that he attains” (221). This is how
Arabella sums up his character: “Never such a tender fool as Jude is, if a woman seems in trouble and coaxes him bit. Just as he used to be about birds and things” (330-31). He is so weak that he is unable to achieve his aspirations.

There is great crisis indeed in both the emotional and intellectual life of Jude. But there is no great struggle, no resistance, and no defiance. His vision is blurred on account of sensuality as well as dreamy visionary attitude towards life. He just submits, succumbs, and surrenders. He submits to the dictates of his heart, succumbs to temptations and surrenders to seductive charms of women and magic of liquor. There is nothing heroic about his deeds. Harold Orel reveals that Jude is caught in the clutches of a “war waged between flesh and spirit” (32). He leads a squalid life and gives up his ambitions and desires that he longed for from his childhood: “The intentions as to reading, working, and learning, which he had so precisely formulated only a few minutes earlier, were suffering a curious collapse into a corner, he knew not how” (41). The protagonist comes to their tragic doom through a flaw in their character. Jude’s sensuous temperament, Arabella’s gross sexuality and Sue’s immense inconsistency bring about the tragedy.

Thomas Hardy deals with the real issues of mankind: Marriage, Love, and Sex. He seems to caution that when they are based on wrong motives, they bring about ruin. The central issue in most of the novels is sexual love, a grinding passion that sweeps men and women along despite themselves. Infidelity, illegitimacy, and immorality lead to grief. So much so man misses the bliss of married life and the joy of true love. It is reflected in Tess’s relations with Alec, Eustacia’s relations with Wildeve, Bathsheba’s relations with Troy, Jude’s relations with Arabella, and in the seduction of Fanny Robin.
The novels portray the wrecked lives of the people. Hardy speaks out frankly on serious issues that produce a constant conflict in human life. Hardy is an objective writer. He is a keen observer of life. He interprets his observation in terms of human feelings. Everywhere he discovers the active and sovereign presence of a force in the form of a tragic flaw in man. He portrays the real human predicament. His theme is mankind’s predicament in the universe. Hardy’s vision of life yields an account of the world and the universe man lives in.

Thomas Hardy’s anguish at evil in the society produces a zest in creating helpless characters of the Victorian Age and delves deeper into the minds and hearts of man. Thus, he visualises the never ending misery of his protagonists, which becomes a dominant feature in all his novels. He uncovers the hidden orbs of the society and tries to prove that his characters meet dead-ends only if they try to go out of the way in choosing evil and when they do wrong to others. So their lives become suffocating, disturbed, and eventually bring about a tragic consequence.

Thomas Hardy believes strongly in women’s capabilities and he tries to picture their sufferings under the clutches of the male dominated Victorian Society. Yet, Hardy has beautifully sketched ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ women. Susan Henchard and Fanny Robin are damned when they fail to take decisions. They abide to the Victorian law and feel that they are inferior to men. John Stuart Mill asserts that:

After marriage, the man had anciently the power of life and death over his wife. She could invoke no law against him; he was her sole tribunal and law. For a long time he could repudiate her, but she had no corresponding power in regard to him. By the old laws of England, the
husband was called the lord of the wife; he was literally regarded as her sovereign. (37)

Hardy has represented this social evil, a dominant social custom that was prevailing in England. He does not wish to be a silent observer and he tries to awaken the sleeping conscience in man and has made his protagonists to be challenging personalities who had rights in shaping their own lives. Women who are neglected in the Victorian society are brought into limelight and are given equal importance to that of man in his novels. They play a pivotal role as man. Rosemarie Morgan comments on the strategy that Hardy follows in his novels:

Hardy’s Wessex world is broadened yet kept well within the range of plausibility and possibility. Women work outside the home in both conventional and unconventional occupations, from teaching to negotiating the price of corn, from serving as barmaids to inaugurating telegraphic systems, from working as milkmaids to organizing public readings. Women travel unaccompanied beyond the neighbourhood, embark upon enterprises of their own volition, initiate relationships. (ix)

But, Hardy’s protagonists experience condemnation from society and they experience a fruitless life. The decisions to be taken on every facet of life, reflects the innate nature of man. If there is no ‘free-will’ and no freedom of choice, the individual has no moral responsibility. If there is no moral responsibility then there will be no tragic suffering and ultimately no tragedy. Hardy’s characters generally face a struggle between their characters and own will. He emphasises more on love and marriage and his love theme generates a tragic force. Men bring about rebellion, against life, and women entail an
endless capacity of suffering, and this is what dominates the characters that lie concealed in the male dominated society. This is the tragic power; and Hardy is acclaimed as the greatest tragic writer among English novelists.

Death occupies a lion share in Thomas Hardy’s novels. His characters reflect disappointment and frustration. His anguish at the dark nature of man shudders the foundation of his soul. His disappointment and agony over the bloody wars and killing are reflected in his poem “The Darkling Thrush” where he laments the death of a soldier who was killed in the Boer War (1899-1902):

The wind his death- lament

The ancient pulse of germ and birth

Was shrunken hard and dry.

And every spirit upon earth

Seemed fervourless as I. (13-16)

Hardy deals with the problem of death in a way human being confines and anticipates it as a true piece of detail which imposes upon the whole itinerary of existence. The existential reality underlines the fact that death is not an event alone but in a particular time it severs the thread of life; to a certain extent it is a fundamental process which goes together with life as its substantial form. When the protagonists investigate and reflect upon the purpose of existence, death kindles their self-awareness and moulds their choices and approach in their lives. Hardy by implementing tragedy in his novels highlights the entity of life. He not only concentrates on the darker side of life but also discerns the surge grandeur that lies beneath the apparent painful life.
Thomas Hardy believes that evil and good exist together and the latter cannot be noticed without the existence of the former. Hardy stresses that man should be happy on any situation that is offered to him. His novels announce that joy and grief enter man’s life anytime though they are stained with miseries of life. The struggle against ‘good’ and ‘evil’ or ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ is in fact not the struggle against each other but against ‘Will to Power’ that powerfully exist among us. It is to be naturally understood that one cannot corrupt people’s reason and it is essential to realise that ‘Will to Power’ encourages man to face the reality of life.

It is found that Thomas Hardy delves deep into human nature and finds the dark forces therein that drive man to destruction. In Hardy’s novels the characters are all complex characters for they represent divergent traits in their personalities, they may struggle against a hostile environment but they take their own decisions. They have their own volitions and act on their own impulses. Man comes to ruin because of some fault in his nature, a fault that dominates his character and encompasses his ruin just as a thick fog encompasses a whole valley. This is human tragedy. Like Hardy, William Golding has a profound sense of human nature. He explores the hidden depths of human nature and discovers the destructive forces that cause human suffering and pain. In his novels, he gives a clear expression to the treatment of evil and darkness. The innate darkness of human being is evil. A tragic comprehension of human nature is a profound characteristic of Golding’s mind. Now, this leads to an analysis of Golding’s novels in the third chapter. Golding’s novels are the general tragedy of human existence.