

Chapter Four

ASSERTION OF SEXUAL SUPERIORITY

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE AND GURUSAGARAM

MALE EGO'S DARK SUBCONSCIOUS

Hardy and Vijayan expose the dark subconscious of the Male Ego through depictions of the Egdon Heath and the war ravaged Bangladesh respectively.

Hardy describes the heath as "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".¹ The dark and abysmal contours of the Male psyche are objectively and visibly manifested here.

Eustacia's affinity with and abhorrence of the Heath and Sivani's dread of the war scenario of Bangladesh draw onto striking similarities. Both female characters should strive to escape the memories of these intrepid scenes of the Male Ego's dark and wild subconscious. Both the situations present the overwhelming insignificance of the female against the dominant Male Ego.

Both the scenes are dexterously carved out to cater to the arrogance and egoistic self of the male where the female players are relegated to playing secondary roles, where they are finally sacrificed or made forever doomed to its machinations. John Holloway aptly comments:

"Clym Yeobright was 'inwoven with the heath'; he was 'permeated with its scenes, with its substance...his estimate of life had been coloured by it'. The Heath limits Eustacia in the

same way, though she is a newcomer to it. Mrs. Yeobright, Clym's mother, is also limited by circumstances".²

DUBIOUS CLAIMS OF THE MALE EGO.

In an attempt to run the world according to its own dictates, the Male Ego projects him in the garb of certain idealism the very roots of which are questionable or dubious at its best. Though Hardy seeks to present Clym as one on whose appearance there are raves of profound thinking, the character fails to sustain this impression throughout. This aspect of the mind of the male protagonist turns out to be rather unconvincing.

It is never the driving force in his character. Though his avowed intention is to bring the humane quality to the life of the Heath dwellers, in practice it turns out to be one, which systematically dishevels and destroys the life of at least two female characters in the novel, his mother and Eustacia. He involuntarily drives both characters to their dark deaths.

Though Clym talks about setting a school for the heath dwellers whose ultimate immaterialisation pushes him into vestiges of the preacher, in both situations the driving ideology is left vague and imprecise. Rosemary Sumner notes:

"None of his difficulties in coping with his emotional experience are derived from a conflict between a traditional education and modern ideas, as those of Angel and Sue are, at least in part, and so Clym's modernity remains theoretical and abstract, on the periphery of the story."³

Clym's Male Ego never allows him to perceive the woman's predicament in the pseudo grandiose plans he is drawing out for the Heath. He implicitly assumes that Eustacia may serve a good mistress at his dream school, whose practicability he is unmindful of. It may be suspected there are inexplicable elements of hedonism in this attitude of the Male Ego:

"he could not help indulging in a barbarous satisfaction at observing that, in some attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the fern and furze-tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves" ⁴

Clym is arrogantly unwilling to respect the desires and hopes of the woman who blindly trusted him. The Male Ego always tends to see and interpret the world according to its own dictates:

' "I would rather not say. It may have been fault of the circumstances, which were awkward at the very least. O Clym-I cannot help expressing it-this is an unpleasant position that you have placed me in, but you must improve it-yes, say you will- for I hate it all now! Yes, take me to Paris, and go on with your old occupation, Clym! I don't mind how humbly we live there at first, if it can be Paris, and not Egdon Heath.'

'But I have quite given up that idea,' said Yeobright, with surprise.

'Surely I never led you to expect such a thing?'

'I own it. Yet there are thoughts, which cannot be kept out of mind, and that one was mine. Must I not have a voice in the matter, now I am your wife and sharer of your doom?'

'Well there are things which are placed beyond the pale of discussion; and I thought this was specially so, and by mutual agreement.'

'Clym, I am unhappy at what I hear,' she said in a low voice; and her eyes drooped, and she turned away.'⁵

Gurusagaram presents a series of situations where women are sidelined and subjected to the dominant Male Ego. Kunjunni, his Editor and a host of male characters in the novel pride themselves in being the oppressors of women and their desires:

'Saying this the Editor puffed the cigarette.'

"We have spend years without betraying the boredom," the Editor said: "Unless we give the impression that we still have ardent faith in the bankrupt ideologies, we should be inviting the risk of becoming enemies of many. In fact it is good that my wife died, that too without giving birth to a child. If she had been alive I would have been forced to create the impression that I still have interest in her in this old age. It will be more strenuous than pretending that I am interested in Cuban revolution. You may take this box of Cuban Cigars. Otherwise while lighting every cigar many unpleasant truths about Cuban revolution and my wife will come to mind-"⁶

THE TORMENTED, DEFEATED WOMAN

The Male Ego systematically deprives the female selves to come into their own. Both the novels teem with instances of the woman characters stripped of their elemental self-respect. The male protagonists seem to thrive by the downfall and deprivation of the woman. In The Return of the Native, Eustacia, Thomasin and Mrs Yeobright are depictions of tormented, defeated women.

Eustacia is study of immense depth and profundity of the female self and the sheer hopelessness of the woman against the male oppressors. Her relentless longing to escape the heath may be seen as the subconscious desire to escape the dark dominant instincts of her male oppressors of which heath is the visible emblem and manifestation. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy" Lawrence sees Eustacia as a natural aristocrat, identifying her with the dark, pristine abysmal powers in nature.

Eustacia seems to lead a silent rebellion against the male dominated society, its conventions and ethical systems. The very opening scene of the novel casts Eustacia in a different light, isolated from the general stream of the humanity at Heath.

Like other women characters in the novel, her rebellion is doomed to be suppressed and defeated by the male chauvinistic society. Death in the waters of weir is the natural, logical end of her rebellion.

In her act of lighting the private bonfire, James Giddin, discerns the beginning of this rebellion:

'Eustacia's rebellion, her use of the bonfire for personal reasons, places her outside the normal community on the heath, a community for whom the bonfire is public, ceremonial, and connected with a set of established traditions.'⁷

John Paterson identifies Eustacia as a character with an inherent potency to eschew the Patriarchal culture. She is the symbol of the violent uncultivated primeval self of nature:

'In being converted from daughter to grand-daughter, she achieved the fatherlessness, and in effect the isolation from conventional law and authority, that ultimately distinguishes her as a type of the romantic individual.'⁸

The dominant Male-Ego drives the woman to the brink of existence. In her desperation, she is forced to adopt an attitude that goes against the core of her feminine quality:

'To Eustacia 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.

Suddenly she aroused herself and exclaimed, ' But I'll shake it off. Yes, I will shake it off! No one shall know my suffering. I'll be bitterly merry, and ironically gay, and I'll laugh in derision!"⁹

Hardy's women characters never succeed in winning the rebellion against the Male dominated society. Its machinations systematically unnerve them and draw them to the inevitable catastrophic defeat. Eustacia goes on in a rage of unearned defeat:

'How have I tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! ... O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!' ¹⁰

Gurusagaram abounds in similar sagas of the frustrated, dejected women who strove futilely to prove their worth in a world of intense male domination. Kunjunni, the male protagonist remembers the pangs of the desolate girl who was subjected to his youthful lust years back:

'Himavati came inside.'

"Has the mother left?" she asked.

"Left," said he

Feeling a little embarrassed she prepared to leave.

"Wait," he forbade.

Himavati waited, the daughter of the servant was obliging. Her dark complexion and the darkness of the locks became fragrance and warmth in darkness. The image of her returning sad and dejected still lingers in the mind.'¹¹

Pandavapuram of Sethu is one of the notable novels in Malayalam whose leit-motif turns out to be the woman's quest for freedom and identity. Pandavapuram explores the theme of a woman's quest of her intrinsic self in a world, codified and formulated exclusively by the Male Ego.

FEMALE SUBJUGATION AND DEPENDENCE ON MAN

The Male dominated society patterns the societal and economic systems in such a clever way that the woman is always made dependent on man for sustenance and survival. A woman is always made to play a subservient role in the emerging scheme of things. Her every attempt to come to her own authentic existence is doomed to failure and disaster.

The Return of the Native has its beginning with the image of a dejected frustrated Thomasin, who could not marry Wildeve, making her exhausted journey back to the Egdon Heath. It is explained as an accidental mistake with the marriage license, which later turns out to be a clever ploy of the male player. It is ironical that, the woman alone has to bear alone all the subsequent humiliation such an occurrence brings in its course. The Man is immune to the embarrassment that it entails, in a primeval society such as that at Egdon.

The pathetic dependence and subservience of the woman to the man is emphasised again, during Eustacia's last desperate attempt to flee the Heath. As she stands on Rainbarrow, the realisation strikes on her that she is penniless. The option available to her is that she must either ask Wildeve for money, which her sense of self-respect will not permit or become his mistress. Both acts may entail the loss of her individualism and impregnable ethos:

"Can I go, can I go?" she moaned. "He's not *great* enough for me to give myself to-he does not suffice for my desire! If he had been a Saul or a Bonaparte." ¹²

The Male-Ego seems to derive a kind of sadistic pleasure from the sufferings he inflicts on the woman. The male players expend their entire effort to assure that the woman is tormented beyond endurance:

" Observing that she did not reply he regarded her more closely. She was almost weeping. Images of future never to be enjoyed, the revived sense of her bitter disappointment, the picture of the neighbours' suspended ridicule which was raised by Wildeve's words, had been too much for proud Eustacia's equanimity." ¹³

Gurusagaram is replete with images of the female subservience in the society defined by Male hegemony. In times of both war and peace, it is the woman who must play secondary role to the machinations of the Male ego and its dominance. Kunjunni elaborates the long saga of the exploited, violated, anguished woman to Allah Buxe, from the archetypal Draupadi to her latter day nameless, faceless counterparts:

` Feeling distraught, Kunjunni walked towards the bar again.

There, Allah Buxe stood disenchanted. He began to narrate the

tale of Dacca again, "They strip our women. During the partition it happened once. Now again for the second time. When the war is over, molestation will remain."

"It was always like that, Allah Buxee. At the root of Mahabharata battle, there is the molestation of Draupadi. After the war, only it was left behind." ¹⁴

LOVE AS A FANCY

The feeling of love comprehended by the male and female characters, in these two novels offers a stark contrast. In both the novels, the love becomes a passing fancy and an avenue to fulfil their egoistic machinations for the Male ego. When most of the woman characters, from Eustacia and Thomasin to Sivani reveal the intensity of passionate love and undergo sufferings on account of it, the Male Ego contents itself with the superficial aspects of love.

There is hardly any instance in The Return of the Native to suggest that love belongs to the deepest core of the leading male characters Clym and Wildeve. With regard to Clym's love towards Eustacia, as "the first blinding halo kindled about him by love and beauty" it is rapidly extinguished, "sometimes he wished that he had never known Eustacia, immediately to retract the wish as brutal". In his own self-doubting attitude to love, he draws a striking parallel to Jude.

In the case of Clym, his professed love for Eustacia is nothing but the manifestation of the lurking Ego. It is intensely ironical that he never strives to understand Eustacia or her real aspirations. Instead he seeks to project her as his own fancies dictate. It is curious to observe the way he reaches the premise that "she

would make a good matron of a school" which could not have been there in her wildest fantasies.

Once the flippant fancy vanishes and love comes to dust, the Male-Ego has no qualms in ascribing the whole blame on the woman as is revealed in this angry outburst of Clym at Eustacia:

" There is reason for ghastliness. Eustacia, you have held my happiness in the hollow of your hand, and like a devil you have dashed it down.' ¹⁵

D.H.Lawrence makes the observation:

" And Egdon made him marry Eustacia. Here was action and life, here was a move into being on his part. But as soon as he got her, she became an idea to him, she had to fit in his system of ideas. According to his way of living, he knew her already, she was labelled and classed and fixed down." ¹⁶

In Gurusagaram, Vijayan rarely devotes any length of space to expound the love affair between Kunjunni and Sivani. But there is ample evidence to suggest that it is a relationship based more on the intellectual preconditioning of the Male rather than on any deep understanding of the ardent passions of the woman. Like the Eustacia-Clym relationship, the Sivani-Kunjunni relationship ends on a bathetic dénouement:

' ... Sivani sat at the feet of Kunjunni, weeping bitterly.'

"You may not forgive my sin," she said then.

" Oh Sivani-

" Please do not hate Kalyani. She should not leave with that burden"

Sivani grew sober. Then from some plane of reality unheard of before, strange words descended on Kunjunni.

" Kalyani is not your daughter. Pinaki is her father."

17

THE MALE EGO AND THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPULSE

As the attempts to control and dominate over the world come to naught, the Male Ego reveals tendencies of violence and destruction. At times when he is unable to find an object or person to give vent to his frustration, he may turn the destructive potential on himself, causing tremendous undoing to himself and the society that supports him. He grows extremely alienated from the surrounding reality and from himself.

But instead of repenting his acts of violence and destruction, the Male Ego seeks to cast his burden on the entire social fabric and especially on the community of women. He rarely seeks to annul his wrong doings to the members of the weaker sex. Instead he deliberately chooses to become a figure wallowing in self -pity. In the logical aftermath of his desperate isolation and seclusion, he seeks to expend the last of his energies on the society which he had ceased to trust.

Eustacia rightly retorts to Clym about this destructive impulse of the Male-Ego, which has pushed her life to the rock bottom:

" 'You exaggerate fearfully,' she said in a faint, weary voice: 'but I cannot enter into my defence- it is not worth doing. You are nothing to me in future, and the past side of the story may as well remain untold. I have lost all through you, but I have not complained. Your blunders and misfortunes may have been a sorrow to you, but they have been a wrong to me...You deceived me-not by words, but by appearances, which are less seen through than words. But the place will serve as well as

any other- as somewhere to pass from-into my grave.' Her words were smothered in her throat, and her head drooped down." ¹⁸

In Clym, this destructive neurosis of the Ego may be discerned in his acts of blinding himself through overstrain and stooping to the vocation of the furze cutter. In a way these gestures offer him an escape from the powerful demands of conscience. Here Hardy comments:

" A forced limitation of effort offered a justification of lowly courses to an unambitious man, whose conscience would hardly have allowed him to remain in such obscurity while his powers were unimpeded" ¹⁹

Freud points out a parallel between the demands of the individual's superego and the demands made by systems of ethics on the community. The superego can make excessive demands on the individual:

'In our investigations and our therapy of the neuroses, we cannot avoid finding fault with the superego of the individual on two accounts; in commanding and prohibiting with such severity, it troubles too little about the happiness of the ego, and it fails to take into account sufficiently the difficulties in the way of obeying it...in our therapy we often find ourselves obliged to do battle with the superego and work to moderate its demands.' ²⁰

The passivity in Clym at his social failure, offers his Ego to come down on women characters, Eustacia and his mother with a neurotic vengeance. The Male Ego turns its failure into the weapon to inflict psychological torment on the weaker sex.

Eustacia's desperate pleading to accept her grand-father's help and Clym's stubborn refusal, bring to the fore this dark banal strategy of the Male Ego:

'But my grandfather offers to assist us, if we require assistance?'

"We don't require it. If I go furze-cutting we shall be fairly well off.'

'In comparison with slaves, and the Israelites in Egypt, and such people!' A bitter tear rolled down Eustacia's face, which he did not see. There had been *nonchalance* in his tone, showing her that he felt no absolute grief at a consummation which to her was a positive horror.' ²¹

Gurusagaram explores another dimension of the historicity of the Male Ego's failure and the consequent neurosis. Here too, he has to direct his pathological depression against women. As Allah Buxe recapitulates the Bangladesh war, there evolves the parallel saga of the violated woman in her captivity and dejection:

' Men crowd around the woman who strip herself and dance. No one is there to prevent the nude dance of the birth of the historical moment. The men who gather around that naked dancing girl are soldiers of the marauding army. It is the woman's body, which is exposed to the prying eyes of the lusty, whether it is the fall of Armenia or that of East Bengal...Who, is that girl dancing now? Don't you know me? Don't know. Tears roll down her cheeks. There is a little lamp at the feet of the girl....' ²²

THE MALE EGO AND NARCISSISM

The male protagonists in Hardy and Vijayan are seen to be too much preoccupied with themselves. This excessive concern bordering on narcissism inhibits an adequate openness to the realities that need to be understood. Narcissism carried to the extremes reveals itself as acts of self-destruction as well as the destruction of all other beings associated with him.

Clym's slavish adherence to books over which he idly sits, the degeneration to the occupation of the furze-cutter and the final shifting into the role of the evangelist, are all manifestations of this self-destructive impulse of narcissism. Narcissism leads to successive alienation from the people one loved and is loved by. It is obvious that Clym wants to be disapproved by his mother, revealing the Male Ego's rebellion and self-destructive motives.

The Male-Ego's destructive impulse finally leads to the alienation and death of two women in the novel. It can be observed that in both cases the Male-Ego codifies and modulates the world of the women according to its own dictates and it essentially leads to their ruin.

Ian Gregor makes the observation:

" Clym's behaviour to Eustacia since his marriage become increasingly self-absorbed and boorish, and however much she knew of his desire to remain on Egdon, she can never have anticipated his total obsession with it, matched by total indifference to her own wishes." ²³

Narcissistic impulses of the Male-Ego and its consequent alienation from the society take possession of all major male characters in Gurusagaram. From the protagonist Kunjunni to Thapasachandran, all male characters choose to impose their

will on women and never seek to understand the desires of their female counterparts with earnestness or sincerity:

"Kunjunni did not know as to what he was seeking in those inner chambers. He was searching for some strange smell that lay hidden in there. Searching for the smell of the child. Wherever that vague contours of smell broke, he grew violent like a wild animal." ²⁴

THE MALE EGO AND DOGMATISM

The male protagonists in these two novels seem to adopt the view that, their set of notions formulated by their egos, is the only truth that holds good for the society. They fiercely resist all challenges to this doctrinaire of their own creation. It is curious to observe that Clym or Wildeve hardly pays any heed to the dreams or aspirations of their female counterparts.

They preordain and manipulate the entire ethical and social fabric for their own convenience. Clym asks the turf-cutter whether Eustacia ' would like to teach children' ²⁵ but pays no attention to the answer. He scarcely takes it when she wants to talk about Paris. He insists on staying back in the Heath as the visible manifestation of his strange and ambiguous notions on education for the heath people. Clym will not listen to his mother as she says, ' The place is overrun with schoolmasters. You have no special qualifications' ²⁶

Robert B Heilman makes the following comments:

"... the egoist inside the benevolent idealist bursts out fully when Clym, sure of grave misdeeds by Eustacia, attacks her with the crude fervour of a prosecuting attorney." ²⁷

Eustacia intuitively realises this inevitable failure of the dogmatic Male-Ego as she explains it to Wildeve:

" ' ... He's an enthusiast about ideas, and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the Apostle Paul.'
 'I am glad to hear he's so grand in character as that.'
 'Yes; but the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in Bible he would hardly have done in real life.' ²⁸

Ian Gregor analyses this strain of the dogmatism in Clym:

" For one thing his behaviour prior to his career as an itinerant preacher has not of kind to win much sympathy; he remains morose, morbidly self-righteous and self-pitying." ²⁹

In Gurusagaram, the Male-Ego's dogmatism is an attitude and phenomenon that are carried down to the son from the father. Here too it is the woman who becomes the silent victim of the male dogmatism. Like the ambiguous idealism of Clym, abandoning Eustacia on the primeval heath, Sanatan, who never conveys the secrets of his underground organisation to his wife, draws Niharika to the bitter pangs of widowhood. Yet she must bear the tragedy of isolation and persecution all alone.

Like Sanatan, her son too treads the same path clinging onto his dogma, Niharika is left to her reclusive life without aid or assistance from the male actors who caused her ruin:

" Oh Lord," Niharika Didi had told Kunjuni in an earlier visit, "
 Thapasan's father should not have kept it a secret. Now
 Thapasan is going the same way. The same dogma, the same
 secret." ³⁰

RETURN TO PRIMITIVISM

Both the novels reveal an attempt on the part of the Male Ego to return to a kind of primitivism, where he can conveniently be oblivious of granting the woman her due and assert its Male hegemony. By this urge to return to primitivism, the Male Ego is also trying to evade his responsibilities to his female counterpart.

Clym's decision to remain in the heath is a pointer to this dark aspect of the Male Ego. He must disregard all the prayers of Eustacia to take her to the modernity and civilisation of Paris. Paris, for Clym may hold the possibilities of the woman coming into her own and realising her potencies. The Male Ego must ensure that this possibility is averted at all costs to safeguard the centuries old Male domination.

Ian Gregor seeks to emphasise a related point when he comments:

"Intellectuality is partnered by primitivism, a heady brew for the sophisticated, and stirred up in Clym's case because, between 'the kingdom of the mind, and the vast tract of unenclosed land', there is nothing that can lay claim to his imagination. He is trapped between two versions of experience, 'I shall keep a school' and 'barbarous satisfaction' at the domination of the Heath over man's attempts at cultivation. For him' character' and 'land' remain disjunct, and when he is made to feel the conflict between them, then he becomes radically self-estranged." ³¹

THE MALE EGO'S ESCAPE FROM THE DEMANDS OF CONSCIENCE

Many of the apparently philanthropic and ascetic gestures of the male protagonists in Hardy and Vijayan could be seen as the deliberate attempts of the Male-Ego to escape the powerful demands of conscience. Clym's very claims to do something

to elevate the heath dwellers have elements of dubiousness in them. At best his plans are vague and imprecise, as his pragmatic mother and rustics identify them in unfaltering terms.

Clym, sitting slavishly over his books, eventual blinding himself, through overstrain and total disregard of Eustacia, offer glaring instances of a neurotic self-abandonment. In Civilisation and its Discontents, Freud emphasises this tendency as 'severe superego', which becomes the driving force of Clym. Freud makes the remark:

" A forced limitation of effort offered a justification of lowly courses to an unambitious man, whose conscience would hardly have allowed him to remain in such obscurity while his powers were impeded" ³²

The Male-Ego carries itself to the stage, where the whole blame for the disasters in life is attributed to the female, and he seeks to escape from the severe indictments of conscience. The exchange between Eustacia and Clym after the disillusionment elicits this aspect:

" 'You are my husband. Does not that content you?'

'Not unless you are my wife without regret.'

'I cannot answer you. I remember saying that I should be a serious matter on your hands.'

'Yes, I saw that.'

' Then you were too quick to see! No true lover would have seen any such thing; you are too severe upon me, Clym- I don't like you speaking so at all.' ³³

There is a stark contrast between Clym idly sitting over his books and Thapasachandran clinging onto books of antique ideology in Gurusagaram. Thapasachandran could have returned to the life of his mother and Bengal. Realising

the truth and meaningless of his martyrdom and sacrifice, he must remain the fellow traveller of an ideology, whose real worth and practicability is dubious and questionable:

" Mukhopadhyaya Family has extensive influences in Calcutta even today. To exonerate Thapasachandran, Niharika Mukhopadhyaya knocked at many doors. Many of them were willing to open. But Thapasachandran sat brooding in the cell clinging onto his books of ideology." ³⁴

COWARDICE OF THE MALE EGO

One of the basic reasons for the eagerness of the Male Ego to dominate is its cowardice. There is an increasing reluctance on the part of the male characters in Hardy and Vijayan to perceive truth in its purity and authenticity. They refuse to see the truth about themselves as well as about others. The male chauvinists always tend to visualise and interpret the world according to their own preconceived notions and rarely dare to go beyond these self- imposed limits.

The characters from Clym and Wildeve to Kunjuni and Thapasachandran never deviate from this mood of self-congratulation and contentment. For them the woman exists and survives to cater to and enhance their world of shallow illusions. But there comes the unavoidable moment when the illusionary fantasies come down under its own weight, leaving the male character to face the unadorned truth of existence.

That moment will prove too unbearable for him causing violent outbursts of temper. The Male-Ego takes recourse to the ultimate moment of annihilation and self-destruction. The inevitability and irretrievability of this moment

coerce him to resort to survival strategies, which are the variants of cowardice. Coming under the unbearable burden of this situation, the Male-Ego adopts disguises that may serve as shallow excuses for his apparent failures.

D.H.Lawrence makes a profound study of this dilemma of the Male-Ego and offers poignant insights:

" What is Clym's altruism but a deep, very subtle cowardice, that makes him shirk his own being whilst apparently acting nobly; which makes him choose to improve mankind rather than to struggle at the quick of himself into being. He is not able to undertake his own soul, so he will take a commission for society to enlighten the should of others.... He had never become an integral man, because when faced with the demand to produce himself, he remained under cover of the community and excused by his altruism." ³⁵

Gurusagaram brings forth yet another aspect of this cowardice of the Male-Ego. Here revolution, rebellion and ideology become bywords for the male characters' cowardice and resultant fleeing of the responsibilities to humanity and women in particular. The novelist unveils the true story of the ideological upsurge and revolution in Bengal:

"In the turbulent Bengali villages of Nineteen Sixty Nine, Raicharans were liberated seeing this milk froth. By merging in the military formations of plantains and wild thechis, they waited for the white thunder of autumn. But the bookish academics who came from the cities lost themselves in the ideological wastelands of despair." ³⁶

WOMEN'S DREAMS DEPENDENT ON MAN

The male domination has relegated woman to a position where even her dreams do not have a separate existence. Her fancies, hopes and dreams are always made subsidiary and dependent on those of man. The Male-Ego is never unwilling or hesitant to exploit this pathological subservience of woman to him. He cleverly formulates a dream labyrinth to entrap the woman and make her yield to his malicious designs.



T 000827

Through the dreams of Eustacia, Hardy unveils her subconscious drives. At the beginning of their relationship he encourages her to build up her dreams of Paris with his romantic poetry, her wish-fulfilment in dream images of glamour and Clym as her Knight in shining armour:

"... Well, I remember one sunny room in the Louver, which would make a fitting place for you to live in- the Galerie d'Apollon. Its windows are mainly east; and in the early morning, when the sun is bright, the whole apartment is in a perfect blaze of splendour. The rays bristle and dart from the encrustations of gliding to the magnificent inlaid coffers, from the coffers to the gold and silver plate, from the plate to the jewels and precious stones, from these to the enamels, till there is a perfect network of light which dazzles the eye. But now, about our marriage_____³⁷

Later as he betrays her dream to settle down to an unpretentious life in the heath, he pays least heed to the desertion and hopelessness he has caused in the life of a girl who trusted him to the core:

"All the effect that her remark had upon him was a resolve to chain himself more closely than ever to his books, so as to be the sooner enabled to appeal to substantial results from another course in arguing against her whim."³⁸

Clym-Eustacia romanticism and its inevitable disillusionment have its parallel in Kunjunni-Sivani dream-like marriage and its disastrous denouement. There are suggestions in the novel that Sivani was betrothed to Kunjunni in the fervour of passionate romanticism as conceptualised by the Male-Ego. Since dreams are insubstantial and unsustainable, she must come to face the stark reality:

" Palming his eyes, Sivani passionately kissed him. Kunjunni made love to her without lust. Another face stared Kunjunni through the window as he reclined in the lethargy of the exhaustion." ³⁹

FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS AND INDIVIDUALITY- CASUALTIES IN THE MALE

ASSERTION OF SEXUAL SUPERIORITY

The two novels deal with different sets of ethos and kaleidoscopes. Return of the Native explores the puzzles, agonies and angst of a people against the backdrop of a primeval heath as deep, dark and profound as the lives of characters who inhabit it. The plot of Gurusagaram is cast against the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, and the consequent war in Bangladesh. It brings into focus the agony of the refugees thrown out of their homeland.

In both the novels, the male protagonists seek a certain ideological substratum for reasons, which are apparently vague and imprecise. Clym and Kunjunni are characters much perturbed with themselves. They are unsure of their basic motives and drives of existence. While Clym predictably slips into the role of the preacher towards the end of the novel, the latter seeks solace in the abiding concept of the oceanic consciousness of the Guru. Both of them virtually part with the mundane world and begin their quest for the ultimate peace and bliss.

On the peripheral reading of the novels, this may appear to be the evolution of the stories and the assumed embrace of spirituality as the visible manifestation of the devolution of the Ego. But on a deeper analysis, this may not essentially be the whole truth. The metamorphosis of the Male-Ego, into the seeker of truth and wisdom, may be found to be characterised by certain dubiousness and cowardice, to escape the malicious repercussions that the assertion of the Male-Ego has caused in the society.

Both the novels downgrade the female players into roles of subservience. All the female characters from Eustacea and Thomasin to Sivani and Niharika Didi are systematically sidelined and silenced by the male chauvinists. They read like the tyrannous march of the Patriarchal culture destabilising and debilitating the female will to survive and subsist.

The Male-Ego issues its decrees according to its fancies and dictates, to rule the female world. As the whole system crumbles down under its own weight, the Male players have no compunctions in ascribing the whole blame on the female. For the failure and tragedy of Clym's grandiose ideals, Eustacia must bear the brunt and be martyred. For Kunjunni's disillusionment with the world, Sivani must be hated to the core and made an outcast.

A remarkable similarity between the Male protagonists of these two novels is their real or assumed inclination to a certain intellectual orientation. Clym's slavish adherence to books and Kunjunni's profound perceptions of mysticism bear a deep analogy. It is starkly ironical that, their intellectual orientations do not help to establish in them a sentient attitude to the members of the weaker sex. On the contrary, they deem women as the viable instruments to cater to their own dominant Ego.

They never grow conscious of, or deliberately ignore the fact that, in their ideological conflict, it is the woman who becomes the victim. In both, there is a discernible unwillingness on the part of the Male-Ego to recognise the individuality and freedom of women. So ultimately it turns out that these two novels, in spite of their assumption of representing an advanced state of the human consciousness, in their treatment of the female consciousness and individuality, have recourse to the age-old Patriarchal culture and the assertion of the Male-Ego.

NOTES

1. Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native. ((Ed). James Gindin, W.W.Norton and company, London, 1969) p.126.
2. John Holloway, The Victorian Sage: Studies in Argument (Archon Books: London, 1962) p.87
3. Rosemary Sumner, Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist (Macmillan: London, 1981) p.108
4. The Return of the Native, p.326
5. Ibid, p.193
6. O.V Vijayan, Gurusagaram. (D.C.Books: Kottayam, 1991) p.30
7. James Gindin, A Critical Introduction to Thomas Hardy(Macmillan1994)p.86
8. John Paterson, The Making of The Return of Native (English studies, 19.Berkeley, 1960) p.66
9. The Return of the Native, p.201.
10. Ibid.p.205
11. Gurusagaram, p.43
12. The Return of the Native, p.283
13. Ibid. p.206
14. Gurusagaram, p.125
15. The Return of the Native, p.253
16. D.H.Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy (Selected Literary Criticism). . Anthony Beal (ed.) The Viking Press Inc.1936 p.167
17. Gurusagaram, p.148
18. The Return of the Native, p.256
19. Ibid. p.197
20. Anthony Storr, Freud (Oxford University Press, Excellent Concise Critical Study in the Past Masters Series. 1989) p.84
21. The Return of the Native, p .196
22. Gurusagaram, p.65

23. Ian Gregor, The Great Web-The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (Faber and Faber: London, 1974) p.93
 24. Gurusagaram, p.71
 25. The Return of the Native, III.2
 26. Ibid. III.5
 27. Anne Smith (Ed.), The Novels of Thomas Hardy (Macmillan: London, 1979) p.126
 28. The Return of the Native, p.220
 29. Ian Gregor, The Great Web-The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (Faber and Faber: London, 1974) P.103
 30. Gurusagaram, p.66
 31. Ian Gregor, The Great Web-The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (Faber and Faber: London, 1974) P.102
 32. Anthony Storr, Freud (Oxford University Press, Excellent Concise Critical Study in the Past Masters Series. 1989), p.78
 33. The Return of the Native, p.199
 34. Gurusagaram, p.70
 35. D.H.Lawrence, Study of Thomas Hardy (Selected Literary Criticism). . Anthony Beal (ed.)(The Viking Press Inc.1936) p.417
 36. Gurusagaram, p.88
 37. The Return of the Native, p.156
 38. Ibid. p.193
 39. Gurusagaram, p.127
-