

## Chapter Five

### **MALE TYRANNISM AND THE FEMALE SUBJUGATION**

#### **FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD AND DHARMAPURANAM**

##### **THE MALE EGO MAKING A MOCKERY OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE**

The Male Ego very often reduces the sacred institutions of society and religion to a mockery. The Male Ego seldom seems to attribute any perennial or chaste values to matrimony. He engages himself in the contract of matrimony to further his own selfish motives that have nothing to do with love and fulfilment. Love in Far From The Madding Crowd and Dharmapuram turns into a parody of the original ideal.

Troy re-enacts the amorous exploits of the mythical Theseus with consummate flourish and mastery. He seldom takes cognisance of its unethical and irreligious repercussions. His belated gesture of repentance betrays the shallowness and hypocrisy of the Male Ego to the core. He never registers any moral compunction in the desertion of Fanny Brown for the more glamorous Bathsheba.

Troy becomes the exemplification of the arrogance and chicanery of the Dominant Male Ego. His favourite pastime seems to be sowing the seeds of chaos and destruction in the lives of girls who trusted him. Incapable of and unwilling to annul his past follies, he takes intense pleasure in perpetrating acts of sin against women lured to his circle of evil charm.

His ludicrous gesture of adorning the grave of Fanny Brown whom he denied the least element of mercy and compassion when alive, brings to the fore the

insincerity and superficiality of the Male Ego. The greater irony is that while showing signs of repenting the past sins, he is enacting the same in a new format to the girl he has married, Bathsheba.

If Troy's love is hypocrisy at its worst, then Boldwood's is characterised by all hues of superficiality and flippancy. Ian Gregor is of the view that Boldwood is 'a medieval Knight in his shining armour recast'.<sup>1</sup> His attitudes, gestures, and words to Bathsheba betray lack of warmth and sincerity. Hardy exposes the superficiality as Boldwood begins to develop the illusion that he is in love with Bathsheba:

" He saw her black hair, her correct facial curves and profile, and the roundness of her chin and throat. He saw then the side of her eyelids, eyes, and lashes, and the shape of her ear. Next he noticed her figure, her skirt, and the very soles of her shoes.

Boldwood thought her beautiful, but wondered whether he was right in his thought... " <sup>2</sup>

Here it is obvious that the self-preserving farmer is mainly obsessed with his own fantasies than real love as such.

In the virtual nightmare that the Male dictator has made of Dharmapuri, love does not exist even hypothetically. In the dark world of the tyrant, love and marriage are of mythical and archetypal value to the Male Ego. The women of Dharmapuri become a commodity to be bartered in the thoroughfares. Women survive here according to their saleability.

Perhaps the most poignant depiction of the worst ever degeneration in the status of women in the post-independent India is allegorised in Dharmapuram. The primeval values of Indian womanhood are sacrilegiously dethroned here. In his

outrageous treatment of questions related to women, love and sex, the novelist explores new avenues.

The unquestioned authority of the tyrant, combined with the meekness of the slavish populace, delivers all beautiful women into the harem of the presidential palace. Here they exist and perish as soulless creatures. The State, through its clever machinery ensures that women are left alone in their homes while their husbands are engaged in illusionary wars with a non-existent enemy. There are oblique suggestions in the novel that women deprived of their pleasures, take recourse to lessons in lesbianism:

' In the cantonment, the persuaders' wives made love to the memories of their men, to fragile and elusive images... In one of the homes of the cantonment, Mandakini, the wife of Aryadatta, sat in bed with her friend Sreelata, counselling and comforting her. Sreelata said bitterly, 'it is no use any more! The state of Dharmapuri has accomplished the ultimate divestment of its citizens. It has kept my persuader-husband away so long that I cannot put together his image any more.'

' She began to cry, and Mandakini bent over her and kissed away her tears; then she kissed her on the lips... ' 3

### **WOMAN AS THE 'WEAKER VESSEL'**

Far From The Madding Crowd and Dharmapuranam adopt the attitude of the woman as a weak and inefficacious creature standing against the masculine might. In these, the novelists seem to adopt a distinctively anti-feminist attitude.

Hardy offers the view of Bathsheba as a victim of the tragic inalterability of things. The phrase used ' woman's prescriptive infirmity' 4 is suggestive of the

entanglement in a sequence of events from which she may not be able to extricate herself without the aid of the male characters. The opening sections of the novel reveal Bathsheba as a fiercely independent spirit. She strives to define her own world without the intervention and support of the Male Ego.

But as the novel unveils itself, she successively yields to different figures that are manifestations of the Male Ego in its various aspects. The beginning of the novel offered the perspective of Bathsheba as a girl who rebels against and challenges the Male chauvinistic world. But the novel concludes on the note of the total submission of the female self before the Male power and dominance.

The clever manipulations made by centuries of Male domination have rendered the female weak and her rebellions inefficacious. The machinations of the Male-Ego create the inferiority complex even in a wilful female like Bathsheba. The novel registers gradual and steady decline of the female's quest for self-identity, to her ultimate surrender and compliance to the inescapable reality of the domination of the Male-Ego.

As the mistress of the Weatherbury Farm she seeks to establish the female hegemony over a traditionally male dominated world. She warns the workfolk against taking the view of her as one of the weaker sex: 'Don't any unfair ones among you... suppose that because I'm a woman I don't understand the difference between bad goings-on and good'.<sup>5</sup> This may be regarded as a bold, boisterous attempt to alter the ethos of an orthodox world, which is reluctant to hand over the reigns to women.

But this note of rebellion does not seem to last in the novel. The loss of Troy brings to the core the infelt inferiority and helplessness of the woman:

' Tell me the truth, Frank: I am not a fool, you know,  
 although I am a woman, and have my woman's moments.  
 Come treat me fairly' <sup>6</sup>

One of the basic dilemmas of Bathsheba related to the question of Male-Ego seems to be the contradiction between freedom and responsibilities. Bathsheba is introduced to a world codified by the Patriarchal culture without a father to guide her. The infinite freedom associated with this absence, creates a situation of wavering between traditional ethos of Patriarchy and the attempted counter ethos of matriarchy.

The all-powerful Patriarchal culture induces the silent idea in Bathsheba that the seeds of revolt she is implanting in the society is characterised by purposelessness. She says to Gabriel Oak during courtship at Norcombe, " I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent". <sup>7</sup> Thus she is tamed according to the designs of the male dictates, the perceptions and stipulations of the Male-Ego.

Dale Krammer observes here:

"Except in a limited sense, it is difficult to see this as a moral growth, for rational self-awareness is conspicuously absent. Her irrationality is curbed, not transformed by the end of the novel, for there we find her doing what she had done earlier, seeking an environment in which she is the enshrined centre." <sup>8</sup>

In Dharmapuram, Priyamvada epitomises the tragic plight and subjugation of women in a Male dominated society. Priyamvada offers a ray of hope to the womanhood of Dharmapuri who have been rendered incapable of even self-preservation under the Male Despot's ruthless tyranny:

' The soldiers led Hayavadana away. Paraashara was now sad, his words faltered. 'Fair one, with great regret I consign you to loneliness.'

'Feel no guilt,' Priyamvada said. For I go to where there is no loneliness, to the streets where the whores live. I have been a leader of the State, and have had enough; the act is over, and now I become a whore again, back in the cages of my sisters.' 9

### **MORAL SOLIPSISM OF THE MALE-EGO**

Far From the Madding Crowd presents the spectacle of the Male-Ego creating a private ethical system for the fulfilment of its narrow motives. All the male characters reveal a pronounced derision for the ethical perceptions of society. Troy can perpetuate an affair with Fanny, furtively driving the poor girl and her infant to death. The shallowness of the Male-Ego grows all the more evident in the superficial gestures of Troy to attenuate for the sins he have committed against Fanny.

Troy is re-enacting the images and themes of the traditional gallant in winning over the flirtatious Bathsheba. There is hardly any hint to suggest the least factor of love or warmth in Troy's betrothal to Bathsheba. The vainglorious, self-eulogising braggart flees into obscurity after committing the heinous acts of crime, against the woman who trusted him in a wavering moment.

If Troy imposes himself on Bathsheba through deception and role-playing, Boldwood, the insensitive recluse must harp on her moral obligation to make amends for the past aberrations. Dale Krammer comments:

" Like Sue Bridehead seeking remarriage to Philloston to punish herself for the death of her children, Bathsheba decides to marry Boldwood 'as a sort of penance'. Boldwood, half-mad in his passion to recapture through her his lost dream of happiness, encourages her moral masochism." 10

The male citizens and Bureaucrats of Dharmapuri are virtually protégés of the Tyrant. They subconsciously emulate the aberrations of the Master, the Father figure who keeps Dharmapuri under his vicious spell. Every woman is a concubine for Prajapati. The policemen and soldiers, machineries of the state emulate and perpetrate the sadism of Prajapati against the weaker sex:

'Lavannya knew that the ways of the state were often strange in times of historical insecurity; despite this she asked, 'Is this necessary, Kapitan?'

'Absolutely,' the secret policeman said, and proceeded to measure her breasts and her buttocks. Then prised open her mouth to count her teeth.

....

'Well, now the lips. Let us have a look.'

Lavannya pushed her lips out in a full, wet pout; the secret policemen immediately kissed them a number of times...But the secret policeman was struggling to disrobe her now, growing more and more angry as she restored each undone hook and button, slipping back under cover each inch of exposed territory. '

11

P.K.Rajasekharan makes the observation:

"Two techniques are employed by the autocratic government of Prajapati to exert its dominance, beneath the façade of spirituality; institutions and their modus operandi. Through them it penetrates to the deepest core of the citizen." <sup>12</sup>

### **GENEALOGY OF THE MALE-EGO**

The roots of Bathsheba's rebellion in the opening chapters of the novel may be traced to the memories of the oppressive Male-Ego she experienced as a child. The deep injuries received in the childhood consciousness are likely to have profound influence during adulthood. There are some suggestions in the novel, which reveal Bathsheba's harsh experience of the male tyranny.

Bathsheba's father, a gentleman-tailor, seems to have a kind of co-existence with his wife, without having the sanctimony of marriage vow. We can discern an attempt on the part of the man to play the amorous Male-Ego by ascribing the role of a concubine to his wife. This being the case, there are possibilities of Bathsheba bearing the stigma of illegitimacy. So there is cognisable aversion and contempt for the male oppressor.

These dark memories of the neglected and oppressed sense of the female childhood psyche may be the basis for her statement to Boldwood, "An unprotected childhood in a cold world has beaten gentleness out of me".<sup>13</sup> Her nightmarish childhood of struggle against the Male dominated world grows with her into womanhood.

The theme of the malicious sway of the Patriarchal culture is one of the most poignant themes of Dharmapuram. The entire kingdom of Dharmapuri is reeling under the tyranny of the dominant Patriarchy. In the dystopian world of Dharmapuri, no one escapes the watchful eyes of the President and his idolised father. Vaatasena gives vent to the agony of the common man as he spits on the statue of the President's father:

" ' He was now in a vast square, at the centre of which stood a marble statue. Vaatasena walked up to it.  
'You!' he said, recognising the likeness ' Vermin!'

It was a statue of the President's father.

'The founding father of Dharmapuri's pretences!' said

Vaatasena, spitting on the statue pityingly, and scarring it

desultorily with a piece of granite. 'Ah, you are but a statue.

Were you not one, had you a living body, I would have shorn

your genitals from it and destroyed your seed, because those

that exercise power over their fellow creatures have no right

to procreate, nor do they deserve a requiem when they are

gone.' <sup>14</sup>

### **NEGATIVE, DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL OF THE MALE-EGO**

The Male-Ego disparately seeks to assert its hegemony over the female and rule over her will. At the slightest threat to its supremacy, the Male-Ego's hidden, negative potential comes to the fore. It unleashes an orgy of destruction on other characters and their values. If the effort comes to a naught, in the inevitable disillusionment that ensues, the Male-Ego may turn the destruction upon itself.

Troy and Boldwood manifest this extremity of the irrepressible will of the Male-Ego to dominate and its vast destructive energy. Psychologically Troy may have greater proneness to the destructive tendency, as he is the illegitimate son of an Earl. The stigma of illegitimacy and the subconscious desire to assert the Patriarchal culture may serve as the fundamental level of motivation.

By his extravagant gesture of presenting his father's watch to Bathsheba, he is seeking to assert this Patriarchal code. It is a silent suggestion to Bathsheba to honour the Patriarchy and submit to its dictates:

" That watch belonged to the last lord, and was given to my mother's husband, a medical man, for use till I came of age,

when it was given to me. It was all the fortune I ever inherited. That watch has regulated imperial interests in its time- the stately ceremonial, the courtly assignation, pompous travels, and lordly sleeps. Now it is yours." <sup>15</sup>

Troy anticipates Alec d'Urberville. There is striking similarity between Alec's treatment of Tess and Troy's betrayal of Fanny.

The shallowness and recklessness of Troy in a bid rule Bathsheba and the farm bring both to the brink of destruction. His display of the sword exercise, brilliant and stunning as it is, is emblematic of the phallic symbolism, one of the major associations of the Patriarchal code. The community's peace is restored only when Troy and Boldwood, the two destructive forces, annihilate themselves.

There could be discerned a stark contrast between Sergeant Troy and Prajapathi, two powerful images of the destructive orientation of the Male-Ego. Most of the violence in Far From the Madding Crowd and Dharmapuranam is authored and directed by them. It is curious to note that at the root of this violence and their cynical indifference to human suffering, there is the stigma of illegitimacy. These victims of the Male-Ego seek to victimise society with the repetition of the same sin.

Realising the inevitable catastrophe that his despotic rule has led to, Prajapathi indulges himself in one of the rare moments of recapitulating the past:

' In his bed of many loves, the President lay and ruminated, and the clangour of the State, the Persuaders and the deserting commander, the wars and insurrection grew distanced. The president spoke to himself in the silence that lay about him. He said, Ah, my vital member sags like a worm, and on it are ageing calluses of disease. Who am I that cower behind this worm? Deep within him a worm wriggled. You are Pippalaada,

said the worm. Pippalaada! The name his unwed mother had given him, the name he bore as a citizen-destitute. It tore the lid off the dismal privacy of history.' <sup>16</sup>

### **SELF-CENTRICISM AND NEUROSIS OF THE MALE-EGO**

The Male-Ego always deems the woman as someone whose sole purpose of existence is to cater to his whims. He seeks in the woman, an object to enchant the fancies of his egocentric self. In the ideological and actual life of the Male, he seldom ever strives to know the authentic and individualistic existence of the woman.

Boldwood and Troy offer the worst exemplification of the egocentric male psyche. Faced with unhappy situations, Boldwood reveals a superficial imperviousness, characteristic of repression and the inability to understand anything outside him. He resorts to bullying and pleading to extract the promise of marriage from Bathsheba. The barbaric and sadistic reaction of Boldwood to the distraught woman is, "I'm happy now".

On another occasion, this self-absorption and neurosis may have himself as the victim, as in the disaster to his stacks. The extreme situations of self-assertion of the Male-Ego render him incapable of coping with the normal demands of life. It is obvious that here the Male-Ego brings catastrophe to the whole community by not preventing the destruction of stacks, the source of sustenance for the work force and the common people.

The authorial comment on Boldwood offers an insight into the inherent neurosis of the Male-Ego:

" That stillness, which struck casual observers more than anything else in his character and habit, and seemed so precisely like the rest of inanity, may have been the perfect balance of enormous antagonistic forces- positives and negatives in fine adjustment. His equilibrium disturbed, he was in extremity at once. If an emotion possessed him at all, it ruled him; a feeling not mastering him was entirely latent. Stagnant or rapid, it was never slow. He was always hit mortally, or he was missed." <sup>17</sup>

The Male-Ego's neurosis makes his world limited to himself. He becomes excessively incapable of perceiving the world through objective reality. It is symptomatic of the same neurosis that Boldwood should create his own Bathsheba, who is only distantly related to the real Bathsheba, the owner of Weatherbury Farm. Idealisation carries violence and disaster at the other extreme, as is revealed in Boldwood committing the act of murder.

Dharmapuranam offers instances of the arrogant Male-Ego posing himself as the sole arbitrator of human destiny. Here the Male-Ego registers its stubborn unwillingness to listen to the views and opinions that happen to be contrary. Siddhaatha's attempt to know the truth of Dharmapuri is rendered futile by the agents of the ruling Male Dictator:

'What is his crime?' Siddhaatha asked.

' Treason,' the teacher said. ' A subject beyond the comprehension of ordinary citizen. In truth, it is only arrogant who would want to solve its puzzle.'

Siddhaatha persisted, 'Yet, Venerable Teacher... '

The Teacher swore, and said, ' You waste my time, stranger.' <sup>18</sup>

### **THE MALE-EGO'S FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND WOMAN**

In a society, formulated and dictated entirely by the male code of honour, the intimate feelings of a woman are seldom understood. Rather the male sees and interprets the woman according to the norms of his own life. He fails to realise the truth that woman's life has an exclusive identity of its own.

Oak's lecture to Bathsheba and her refusal to listen to it is highly suggestive of this wide chasm that exists between Man and woman:

" A woman may be treated with a bitterness which is sweet to her, and with rudeness which is not offensive. Bathsheba would have submitted to an indignant chastisement for her levity had Gabriel protested that he was loving her at the same time; the impetuosity of passion unrequited is bearable, even if it stings and anathematizes- there is a triumph in humiliation, and a tenderness in the strife." <sup>19</sup>

None of the three Male characters ever understand Bathsheba in her totality and authenticity. Her 'womanliness' seems to be beyond their comprehension or in their desire to emphasise and assert the Male supremacy, they deliberately ignore it. Bathsheba's retort to Troy brings to the fore her frustration and disappointment in the Male-Ego's unwillingness to recognise this quality of 'womanliness':

"... I am not a fool, you know, although I am a woman, and have my woman's moments. Come! Treat me fairly,' she said, looking honestly and fearlessly into his face. 'I don't want much; bare justice- that's all! Ah! Once I felt I could be content with nothing less than the highest homage from the husband I should choose. Now, anything short of cruelty will

content me. Yes! The independent and spirited Bathsheba is come to this!<sup>20</sup>

Thus in a Community, entirely defined and codified by the Male ethos, the woman gradually loses her self-identity and honour and resigns to meek submission to survive. Boldwood willingly exploits the same Patriarchal code in a bid to make Bathsheba yield to his designs. He seems to be conscious of the fact that in a small community as that of Weatherbury, the woman's choices and predicaments essentially can be controlled by the choices made by man:

" ... She was far from having a wish to appear mysteriously connected with him; but woman at the impressionable age gravitates to the larger body not only in her choice of words, which is apparent every day, but even in her shades of tone and humour when the influence is great."<sup>21</sup>

In Dharmapuram, it is the women, weak and inefficacious though they are, who offer resistance to the despotism of Prajapathi. Here instead of offering sympathy and support, the Male Ego pays scant regard to the courageous voice of opposition of the women. By singing praises of Prajapathi out of sheer cowardice, they alienate themselves from the women folk.

In the horrifying spectacle of the children being dragged out of their houses to feed the flesh factories, the stiff opposition put up by women is poised against the sullen inertia of the Male-Ego:

' Neelopala leapt out of the hut, beating her breasts.' You shall not take my children away! No one shall take my child away!  
'Sullenly the neighbourhood listened. In another hut another woman stirring her broth of pig's guts told her husband, 'Let us go and see what is happening to Neelopala.'

' There is no need for that,' said the man.

....

' Each hut became an island; in these isolations the men waited for their pots of broth to boil, and cursed the lamenting ; voice of the woman which called out for her children.' <sup>22</sup>

### **THE AGGRESSIVE MALE-EGO**

In both the novels, the Male-Ego spares no effort to see that it has established the unchallenged authority over the female world. It systematically plugs all paths of threat to this dominance. Any perceived challenge or threat to this exclusive dominance makes him aggressive. All the hidden, dormant elements of violence come to the fore with tyrannous might, engulfing the whole society with its violent repercussions.

*The most ironical thing is that the Male-Ego even comes to deem the aggression and violence as part of its machismo image and character. The perennial illusion of the male factor happens to be that, if aggression denotes the essential trait of his being, then submission is that of the female.*

Deep within its apparently civilised exterior the Male-Ego breeds the repressed, aggressive barbarian and heathen. Far From the Madding Crowd is replete with imageries and symbolisms of this aggressiveness. Troy's display of his martial prowess, his mad freaks in gambling and horseracing, and Boldwood's act of committing murder are all instances of this aggressiveness.

Boldwood strikes the highest point of this aggression as he blatantly suggests to Bathsheba that she is rather obliged to marry him. He expends no effort to respect the sentiments or individuality of the woman as he says:

"... but I have neither power nor patience to learn such things. I want you for my wife- so wildly that no other feeling can abide in me; but I should not have spoken out had I not been led to hope.' <sup>23</sup>

It is curious to observe that the Male-Ego does not even seek to hide its violence and impudence. Rather it seems to take pride in them. This factor of aggression reveals its ruder and meaner forms with Troy. He is the perfect fusion of a typical braggart and ruthless soldier. His encroachments into the private world of Bathsheba are fashioned after the military aggression into alien territories:

" ' There is some talk I could do without more easily than money.'

'Indeed. That remark is a sort of digression.'

'No. It means that I would rather have your room than your company.'

'And I would rather have curses from you than kisses from any other woman; so I'll stay here.'

Bathsheba was absolutely speechless. And yet she could not help feeling that the assistance he was rendering forbade a harsh repulse." <sup>24</sup>

The Male aggression and sadism acquire the most heinous dimensions in Dharmapuram. Here aggression is not confined to the protagonists and major players. Aggression becomes the canker of the whole tribe of men. Vijayan makes the mob psychology and Male masochism merge in the scene of violence perpetrated against Lavannya in the streets of Dharmapuri:

" Wetting his girl's lips with delicate tongue the boy turned on Siddhartha, 'I have no time for those who whine. I am a young Partisan and an Anti-imperialist. In

this struggle it matters little if this woman is old enough to be my mother.'

" Now the slogans grew tumultuous...*Strip and reveal the truth!* The cry filled the corridors, *Strip! Strip!* And from the avenue outside, passers-by joined in the chant."

Lavannya raised a hand to quieten the crowd; she stood before it, proud mistress of her own body. 'Vile people!' she said. 'Here, I will reveal the Truth you have been hungering for. Look!' Spinning round like a dancer, she cast away her clothes and stood naked before them." <sup>25</sup>

P.K.Rajasekharan observes:

"Vijayan uses sexuality to bring forth the arrogant power of the Male Tyrant. Sexuality here is not sex-desire, but the female body and its voluptuousness. Sex subsists in Dharmapuri to please the arrogant Male-Ego's craze for more power over his world. This is one of the findings of the modern autocracy. Every department of the government, army, intelligence agencies, police, hospitals everybody concentrates on exploiting the female sexuality." <sup>26</sup>

### **MARRIAGE AND WOMEN**

Hardy and Vijayan present instances in the novels, where the sanctity of marriage has been effectively converged into instruments of oppression by the Male-Ego. The Male-Ego uses the institution of marriage not to cherish the sublime ideals of life, but to exploit its contours for its narrow vicious motifs against the weaker sex.

In Far From the Madding Crowd, Boldwood and Troy associate no sanctified ethos to marriage as they expend their efforts to bring Bathsheba into matrimony. The theme, which moves Boldwood is an escape from loneliness while the latter, is infatuated by lust, avarice and illusions of gallantry. But the women attribute all the sacrosanct meanings to this institution, while not being ignorant of the social security it will offer them. Hardy alludes to this glaring disparity between Male and Female perceptions of marriage:

" It appears that ordinary men take wives because possession is not possible without marriage, and that ordinary women accept husbands because marriage is not possible without possession; with totally differing aims the method is the same on both sides." <sup>27</sup>

Bathsheba is coerced into the first marriage because of the clever but unsustainable illusion, Troy created for her. As the illusion disintegrates, she discerns the true colours of her gallant soldier in unadorned truth and simplicity. In the harrowing experience that ensues, she feels deserted and lonely.

She is dragged to the brink of the second marriage, as the Male-Ego cleverly plays on the moral obligations and the need to make amends for the past, while the Male can conveniently be oblivious of both in his own life. The rustic philosophising and wisdom of Henery Fray holds a worthwhile lesson for women:

" 'I don't see why a maid should take a husband when she's bold enough to fight her own battles, and don't want a home; for 'tis keeping another woman out. But let it be, for 'tis a pity he and she should trouble two houses.' <sup>28</sup>

When the man can exert his will and contrivances over a woman to make her accede to matrimonial relationship, the female is practically deprived of such choice.

Age-old social conventions have relegated her to a role of meek submission without offering a token resistance.

Marriage and matrimonial bliss bring no benediction to the women of Dharmapuri. Incest and illicit relations flourish there with the patronage of the state. For gaining political fervour and mileage, the men folk of Dharmapuri are not reluctant to present their wives as offerings:

" ' Our gracious mistress,' she said, 'your beloved wife...'

This was a desperate gambit, but Ramannuaan only laughed.

' Have no fear. She will not come upon us, because today the President has her.'

Ramannuaan's wife was a woman of great beauty, and younger than him by half-a-century. For a moment Lavannya forgot her own nakedness and captivity.

' Merciful God!' she said. ' Do you masters have to do *this* as well?

I had supposed it was enough to partake of the Sacrament.' " <sup>29</sup>

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FEMALE SUBMISSION**

Patriarchal culture spanning over centuries and the dominance of the Male-Ego have created a female subconscious, subjected to deep fears of insecurity. There is rarely any conscious attempt on the part of the female characters in these novels, to shake off the label of 'weaker sex' and 'weaker vessel'. At the beginning of the novel, Bathsheba offers some signs of resistance against the male domination. But this seems to be short lived or only on the periphery of the character.

The novel brings out the successive stages of Bathsheba's submission to the dominant Male. The novel ends with the total surrender of Bathsheba to the

Male hegemony and her rebellion confined to distant memories. The clever machinations of the Male chauvinism have caused the fear psychosis in the woman and it may be the most obvious reason for the woman's almost pathological dependence on man. There lurks the feeling in her subconsciousness that this dependence may protect her against the possible anarchies, distresses and catastrophes in life.

Hardy explores the silent wish of the female to be mastered by man at the end of the first encounter between Bathsheba and Troy:

" '... There are occasions when girls like Bathsheba will put up a great deal of unconventional behaviour. When they want to be praised, which is often; when they want to be mastered, which is sometimes; and when they want no nonsense, which is seldom.' " <sup>30</sup>

The novelist surmises the major cause of the female submission before the dominant male:

" ' Nevertheless, that a male dissembler who by deluging her with untenable fictions charms the female wisely, may acquire powers reaching to the extremity of perdition, is a truth taught to many by unsought and wringing occurrences.' " <sup>31</sup>

Dharmapuram explores the abysmal level to which the fear and insecurity psychosis has descended to, in the case of women. All the women characters in the novel including Sunanda are exploited and violated by the ruling Patriarchy and his junta. It stretches itself to the extent, where even the very idea of revolt becomes exasperating.

The women of Dharmapuri live a life of hopelessness and deprivation. The masochist Male-Ego deems them as instruments to give outlet to their repressed

sadistic libido. Here women get reduced to beings, to be subjected to the Male Ego's sexual fantasies. In Dharmapuri, man-woman relationship is devoid of sentimental hangings and attachments. Dharmapuri thrives in a space where love is alien and unheard of. The Patriarchal code insists on denying even trivial rights to women:

" 'What is your name, woman?' the President asked.

'Chitrangada,' she said.

'Have you been in bed with me before?'

'During the last five summers this humble one has had the good fortune only thrice.'

' Good fortune?' the President demanded. 'Do you call it good fortune?'

' My gracious lord! What more may a woman desire?' <sup>32</sup>

## **TOTAL AND IMPREGNABLE DOMINATION**

### **- A SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY**

Far From the Madding Crowd is set against the backdrop of the pastoral scenario in rural England of the nineteenth century, while the allegorical backdrop of Dharmapuranam is set against Indian political scenario of the 1970's. Thus in theme and substance the novels vary with each other in most respects.

While the characters of Hardy's novel come closest to the lived out reality of the rustic England, their aspirations, dreams and tragedies, the highly exaggerated characters of Vijayan's political allegory draw their sustenance from the political class of Delhi, deeply entrenched in corruption and nepotism.

In spite of the differences in the space-time continuums of the novels, they delineate a remarkable similarity in certain traits in the characters' faiths, belief - systems and their attitudes to the vast flux of life. A close reading of the two novels reveals that despite all external symbols of the onward march of human culture and civilisation, the essential character of the Male Ego remains the same.

Man's basic instincts, his attitudes and Ego cling onto primeval core at all times, ages and scenarios. The apparent sophistications and flourishes that modernism and progress fetch in their trail happen to be on the periphery of his being. At his core lurks something unalterable and imperishable. At unguarded moments, the primeval self, the Male-Ego of the man ferrets out in a bid to control, manipulate and dominate life in its totality.

Far From the Madding Crowd begins on a note where the lone woman character strives to assert her individuality and freedom, in a world of Male Domination. The novel depicts the sequence of her experiences with different versions and aspects of the Male-Ego. In all the situations, either she has to yield to the machinations of the Male chauvinists or she seeks further diversions to escape the reality of her losing out to the male tyranny. The apparently happy end of the novel, where she is betrothed to Gabriel Oak, is in fact the final assertion and triumph of the Male hegemonic world, where the female strove futilely to come to her own.

Dharmapuranam portrays a scenario where the respectability of women and female individuality are largely confined to myth and folklore. Here women's position has been degenerated to the state of a dispensable commodity, an object of sex and lust. Prajapati, the Male tyrant, takes care to ensure that the most fascinating beauties of Dharmapuri never leave the labyrinth of his harem.

In the grotesque world of Dharmapuri, Prajapati transforms the whole kingdom into a brothel, where the President and his coterie could indulge in infinite pleasures of the flesh. In the bizarre world of Male-totalitarianism, female rebellion and resurrection becomes a virtual impossibility.

If female uprising against the Male domination is non-existent at the conclusion of Far From the Madding Crowd, it is curious that in Dharmapuram, it is the solitary mendicant Siddhaatha, who gives hope to Lavannya, the symbol of the exploited, ill-treated, subjugated woman. It is ironical that, here the possible liberation of woman from the Male tyranny should come from another man.

In both the novels, the dominance of the Male-Ego is total and impregnable. Women as a whole are sidelined; their roles relegated to the inferior strata of the social machinery. If the Male-Ego adopts a consistent and tenuous path to come to the full circle in Far From the Madding Crowd, Prajapati has to expend practically no effort to relegate women to the role of subservience. At the very beginning of the novel itself, the Male Domination has reached the stages of stasis and inalterability.

Thus it turns out that the Dominance of the Male-Ego is a psychological and sociological reality, spanning over a great expanse of time. Hardy's novel exposes a particular facet in the history of humanity where the Male-Ego still relies upon the elements of chivalry, valour and pageant and other psychical instruments to make way into the female consciousness, to assert its invincible masochism.

Vijayan begins the novel in a bizarre dystopian world where domination of the Male-Ego has reached farthest stages. In its ultimate race to total domination, the Male-Ego has attained a success, which is rather self-defeating. Here only the dominator remains, the dominated have vanished without a trace and

whimper. The remaining female figures left in the scene of fading light are ghost-like apparitions of their progenitors, of the original and authentic female self.

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### **NOTES**

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4. Far From the Madding Crowd, p.5
5. Ibid X, p.93
6. Ibid xli. p.314
7. Ibid iv, p.34
8. Dale Crammer, (Ed), Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas  
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9. Dharmapuranam, p.125
10. Dale Crammer, (Ed), Critical Approaches to the Fiction of Thomas  
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11. Dharmapuranam, p.37
12. P.K.Rajasekharan, Pithrughatikaram- O.V.Vijayante Kalayum  
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13. Far From the Madding Crowd, Ch.31, p.233
14. Dharmapuranam, p.91
15. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch.26, p.181
16. Dharmapuranam, p. 127
17. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch.18, p.131
18. Dharmapuranam, p.108
19. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch.20, p.143
20. Ibid, ch.41, p.268
21. Ibid, ch.22, p.155
22. Dharmapuranam, p.102
23. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch.19, p.137

24. Ibid, ch.26, p. 175
  25. Dharmapuram, p. 59
  26. P.K.Rajasekharan, Pithrugatikaram- O.V.Vijayante Kalayum Darshanayum (D.C.Books: Kottayam, 1994), p.61
  27. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch. 20, p. 139
  28. Ibid, ch.22, p.157
  29. Dharmapuram, p.32
  30. Far From the Madding Crowd, ch. 24, p.171
  31. Ibid, ch.25. p.174
  32. Dharmapuram, p.127
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