

## Chapter Seven

### **PRE-BUILT EDIFICES OF SELF-IMPORTANCE**

### **TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES AND THALAMURAKAL**

#### **OWNERSHIP OF WOMEN**

The Male Ego very often insists on the ownership of women and its exclusive rights over the body and spirit of women. Its basic purpose is to assert the ideological equation of sexuality with ownership. They deliberately bring terms like 'belong' and 'possess' to establish and impose themselves over the female counterparts. The language of romantic love is used to reproduce the possessive individualism of the male sex ideology.

Alec binds Tess to him by powerful ideological fetters:

'Alec d'Urberville removed his cigar, bent towards her, and

said -

'You are not going to turn away like that, dear? Come!

'If you wish,' she answered indifferently. 'See how you've mastered me!' <sup>1</sup>

His relentless pursuit, his ability to take advantage of every circumstance which brings her more within his power, and his sinister appearance, all conduce to make him more than the stock melodramatic villain as the novel proceeds- as well as to

make him something less, because he becomes less human as he becomes more symbolic.

In Thalamurakal, Chamiarappan poses a question to Devaki, which does not differ from that of Alec:

'You may be repenting becoming my wife', queried

Chamiarappan.

'No'

In that case you may have to witness many scenes like this.

.... he could not forget the words of his wife in later life," I am

the repentance for the sins of Ponmudi."

After this incident on the seventh day, Devakiamma had a

missed abortion.' <sup>2</sup>

### **FEUDALISM, PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN**

In both Tess and Thalamurakal, there is a perceptible attempt on the part of the Male Ego to use the instruments of Feudalism and Patriarchy to exert its will over the female body and psyche. Tess parodies the folklore of the pretty Maid seduced by the Squire, retold in ballad and popular song. We can see the ideological reflex of those social relations, where individuals are imprisoned within a certain definition, which appears as a personal restriction of one individual by another. Alec, the typical representative of Feudalistic and Patriarchal forces perceives Tess as a sexual object to be to be seduced and treated accordingly.

Shalom Rachnan observes:

"Her unconscious sexual attractiveness--her lush figure and

"peony mouth"--relates her to the archetypal fertility principle

symbolised by the goddesses of myth from Ishtar to Venus. In addition, her story is an archetypal folk tale of the wronged maiden who cannot escape from her past, who finally turns on her seducer to destroy him, and who loses her own life as a result. Together, these qualities of the elemental feminine character and the paradigmatic folk tale serve to make Tess of the D'Urbervilles one of Hardy's most forceful novels." <sup>3</sup>

Tess's tragedy has its beginning with her father's attempt to thrive in illusions of the d'Urbervilles, another name for the Patriarchal and feudalistic past. Her family comes to regard her as their potential saviour. Even while criticising their illusions, Tess unknowingly becomes a slave and victim of the same illusions. She willingly plays into the hands of the Villain of the melodrama who imbibes and exhibits all the paraphernalia of the Patriarchal feudalism, which is bent upon using its traditional instruments of seduction and rape against the potential female victims.

Ian Gregor makes the following observation:

" Alec's world of the Stoke-D'Urbervilles, is inseparable from nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism, it is the triumph of the individual bourgeois ethic, what is wanted can be bought." <sup>4</sup>

Mowbray Morris rejected Tess for Macmillan's Magazine. He made the following observation, which is remarkable enough, ' All the first part therefore is a sort of prologue to the girl's seduction, which is hardly ever and ever can be out of reader's mind.' <sup>5</sup>

In Thalamurakal, the Patriarchal Feudalism even leaves behind the lengthy process of seduction and makes direct assaults on the female as a matter of birthright:

'Appukaranavar felt a deep sympathy for the penury of the middle-aged woman. He asked her," Thampuratti has a daughter?"

"Yes"

"What name?"

"Sivakami"

"Send Sivakami as my concubine. 'Am fed up with chakkarapalu of Ezhavan, want to taste the pudding of Brahmin." <sup>6</sup>

### **ILLOGICAL LOGICISM OF THE MALE EGO**

In its inexorable impulse to assert its supremacy, the Male Ego in both Tess and Thalamurakal invents strange logic and drags the hapless female along its aberrant paths. It is curious to observe that both Angel and Chamiarappan insist on interpreting their female counterparts according to their own strange and devious psychological make-up. In both cases the individuality of the female or her deepest desires are seldom taken into consideration.

Michael Millgate makes the following observation:

" Like his successor, Jude, Angel is a more "modern" character than other Hardy men; for he has ambiguous and contradictory motives--some overt, others so hidden under layers of ideas that they can come out only at night. His wavering, his rationalisations, his sophistries, his naive self-deceptions, and his neurotic self-torments ally him to such figures as Stephen Dedalus and Quentin Compson rather than to the typical Victorian hero. Both the sleepwalking and the intensity with which he reacts to Tess's confession may well indicate a hidden sense of sexual guilt, as the emphasis on

feminine "purity" usually indicates an obsession with sexuality as something to be feared." <sup>7</sup>

Angel, in spite of the strong protests from Tess, insists on projecting an idealised image of her, which is doomed to bring disillusionment and frustration, against the rock of stark realism. He goes onto address her by classical names like Artemis and Demeter, whose meaning she scarcely understands. The Jungian theory may help to understand this behavioural pattern of Angel:

" A Collective image of woman exists in a man's unconscious, with the help of which he apprehends the nature of woman." <sup>8</sup>

According to Jung, so long as men are unconscious of their "anima", they project this image onto various women they were attracted to. It is likely to produce disastrous results since they are projecting their own picture onto someone who is very different:

"Every mother and every beloved is forced to become the carrier and embodiment of this omnipresent and image which corresponds to the deepest reality in man." <sup>9</sup>

Jung stresses the importance of recognising that the 'anima' is subjective.

In a short story by Danish novelist Jensen named "Gravida" , there is a striking parallel to Angel's idealising attitude. There the hero addresses his beloved by a classical name and goes on to build up the delusion that she really belongs to another plane of reality. In both stories the possessive attitude of the Male Ego creates a deluded view of the loved ones.

The Male Ego further seeks to distance them from reality:

"He could almost have wished that the apparition might remain visible to his eyes alone and elude the perception of

others: then, in spite of everything, he could look on her as his own exclusive property".<sup>10</sup>

It bears comparable analogy with Angel's horrified rejection of Tess, when he finds that she is not his 'exclusive property'.

This unreal idealisation is doomed to disillusionment and disaster. Tess is led to confess her past, inspired by Angel's own revelation. A sort of uncontrollable turbulence sets in the consciousness of the Male Ego leading to the rejection of Tess:

'Within the remote depths of his constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal of a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it. It had blocked his acceptance of the Church; it blocked his acceptance of Tess'<sup>11</sup>

Out of this disillusionment, emerges the sober truth when he remarks to Tess:

'I repeat, the woman I have been loving is not you.'

'But who?'

'Another woman in your shape.'<sup>12</sup>

The inevitable truth dawns on Tess herself only when the tragedy is full blown:

'O my love, my love, why do I love you so! for she you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been.'<sup>13</sup>

In Thalamurakal, this possessive delusion carries itself to unfathomable depths of psychic aberrations. Here it acquires colorations of mythical and archetypal fantasies:

"In every instance of orgasm Panchali transformed herself into concubine and wife each of the Pandavas. Cheriappan returning after the ecstasy and consummation of the sexual

act metamorphosed himself into Udhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva according to turns. Every time Panchali smiled gorgeously. Panchali whispered into the ears of Cheriappan, adorning him with her ear-ring, who could not bear the profundity of Panchali's disarming laughter," You are none of these, come with me!"<sup>14</sup>

### **NARCISSISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE MALE EGO**

In both the novels, it can be seen that the Male Ego assumes disastrous narcissistic implications and unleashes its vicious effects on the female members.

Angel's love is obviously one of narcissistic, self-regarding kind.

Sigmund Freud opines that this kind of male love displays "marked sexual overvaluation." Freud continues:

"it is even obvious in many forms of love-choice that the object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego idea of our own. We love it on account of the perfections which we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means of satisfying our narcissism."<sup>15</sup>

Michael Millgate observes:

"His actions stamp him ever more clearly as a "Mephistophelian visitant," as he poses as an effigy atop a tomb, frightening Tess, or as he tells her the story of the phantom d'Urberville coach. When his blood seeps with preternatural facility through mattress, floor, and ceiling, we should be less astonished than many critics have been; for

Alec's blood is no ordinary fluid, but an ichor suited to his symbolic role of Satan. "<sup>16</sup>

Angel needs the rustic innocence of Tess because of his own harrowing sense of guilt. But it has to be an abstract idea and not a being with flesh and blood. When he finds her failing in this illusionary attribute of his own ego, he must reject her ruthlessly. By this episode, the novelist highlights the injustice of society's attitude to women. While becoming systematically silent about the outrageous act he perpetrated against the ethical principles of society, he considers Tess's is an unpardonable sin against herself and society. Hardy seems to be attacking the embedded law; though a man could divorce his wife for adultery, a woman could not divorce her husband for it.

R.Carpenter makes the observation:

"Tess is more clearly a kind of Eve than Angel is an Adam. In her innocence and simplicity, as well as in her worship of him as a "godlike" being; in her naturalness and passion; and in her fall from innocence into the knowledge of good and evil, she is closer to the primordial mother of men than Angel is to the first man. Angel is too much the intellectual and skeptic to fulfil the role of Adam, although Hardy twice refers to him in this way. His name indicates better the ambiguities of his position, for it is partly fitting and partly ironic. He is a rather saintly man who knows little of the real world, but he is also rather inhuman."<sup>17</sup>

Schopenhauer wrote in " The Metaphysics of Love":

"A man is always desiring other women, while always clings to one man, for nature compels her intuitively and unconsciously

to take care of the supporter and protector of future offspring. For this reason, conjugal fidelity is artificial with man but natural to a woman. Hence, a woman's infidelity, looked at objectively on account of the consequence, and subjectively on account of its unnaturalness is much more unpardonable than a man's"<sup>18</sup>

In Vijayan's novel, during one of the rare moments of self-retrospection, Chamiarappan, the protagonist says to Raghava Menon:

"Today I am not a rationalist. I don't have the haughtiness to challenge god to make me sneeze....My ancestor fathers have done greater misadventures than that. Hurling Manu-Smriti into the muddy currents of Ganga, buying Brahmin women and made them concubines to bring untouchability to an end. They committed these follies not for the good of the society, but for the satiation of their own ego." <sup>19</sup>

### **SOCIETY PITTED AGAINST THE VICTIMISED WOMAN**

In both Hardy and Vijayan, society maintains a curious and studied silence about the male perpetrators of oppression, while it grows overzealously eloquent about the female victims and strives to nail them with stereotype ethical systems. Society never accepts Tess as a complete human being and all her sufferings are basically on account of that. Tess rightly calls herself a victim.

Even as Alec known for his amorousness and licentiousness can carry on the social discourses and even slip himself into the garb of the evangelical preacher, Tess the victim of his machinations is denied the right to live the life of a dignified

human being by society. The society induces in her a guilt feeling from which she is unable to extricate herself. The rural society refuses to harbour a woman of ill repute in the neighbourhood and that is one of the most perceptible reasons for her eviction.

Peter Widdowson makes the observation:

" Hardy believed that there were some situations in which one might have to sacrifice oneself in the deepest sense because, in a corrupt society, one could remain pure at other people's expense." <sup>20</sup>

In Thalamurakai, the bizarre tale of Theyyandi Muthalali and Chandramathi corroborates the tale of Tess:

'Puliamma made her steps towards Chandramathi. Chandramathi held her in a deep embrace. Releasing one of the hands that hugged, Chandramathi dug her fingers deep into Puliamma's breast. There were nail imprints, blood streams all over the body....In the forbidden embrace, Chandramathiamma and Puliamma lay before the mirror.'

'Ponmudi was seeking answer to the question, which was the last colour, black or white.' <sup>21</sup>

### **THE MALE EGO'S ZEST FOR PATRIARCHY- PAST AND FUTURE**

In both the novels the Male Ego makes oblique references to its concern for the future societies, where it may carry further the suppression of the female will unhindered. It is ironical that Tess's downfall has its beginning in her foolish father's attempt to align himself with the non-existent Tudor family of d'Urbervilles. The irony becomes stark and complete when Angel must reject her for the sake of the hypothetical children yet to be born:

'She had never truly thought so far as that, and his lucid picture of possible offspring who would scorn her was that

brought deadly conviction to an honest heart which was humanitarian to its centre.' <sup>22</sup>

In a gesture of supreme self-sacrifice, Tess decides to leave Angel and return home, highly characteristic of the meek and subjugated woman, who must undergo self-effacing gestures for the sake of patriarchy:

'...though nobody else should reproach me if we should stay together, yet sometime, when years hence, you might get angry with me for any ordinary matter, and not knowing what you do of my by-gones you yourselves might be tempted to say words, and they might be overheard, perhaps by own children. O, what only hurts me now would torture and kill me then! I will go-to-morrow.' <sup>23</sup>

### **RELENTLESS EXPLOITATION OF THE WOMAN**

In both Hardy and Vijayan, the Male Ego deliberately assumes various vestibles in an attempt to win over and subjugate the female. Tess is mastered twice by Alec. The first time he does it by exploiting a fatal division within her consciousness. The second time by her consent, harping on her own fall in the past. Alec wins victory over her by cleverly exploiting her family's dubious dependence on the d'Urberville name and the stark economic realities, which confronted her then.

The clever manipulations of Alec corner Tess into an inescapable situation. Even her meek offer of resistance turns out to be one of submission:

'...Tess, my trap is waiting under the hill...you should be willing to share it, and leave that male you call your husband for ever.'

One of her leather gloves, which she had taken off to eat her skimmer-cake, lay in her lap, and without the slightest

warning, she passionately swung the glove by the gauntlet directly in his face. It was heavy and thick as a warrior's, and it struck him flat on the mouth...

'Now, punish me! she said....'Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out.

Once victim, always victim- that's the law!' <sup>24</sup>

### **THE LURE AND ILLUSION OF THE FAMILY TITLE**

One of the closest similarities between Tess and Thalamurakai is the desperate and dubious clinging of the Male Ego to the family title. The Elder Tess, Alec, Chamiarappan and Krishnankutti, are all in a frantic pursuit of a certain family title, which may become a viable instrument in their hands to exert their might over the members of the weaker sex.

When the present realities become one of sheer hopelessness, denying the male players any effective role in controlling and modulating the destiny of their family or the society around them, they tend to invoke the dilapidated family titles which have long since ceased to exist. It can be observed that all the male protagonists in both the novels, seldom spoil an opportunity, which may make oblique allusions to the grandiosity of the Teutonic d'Urbervilles or Ponmudi Tharavadu.

There is a hoary saga of exploitation, when Tess with questionable lineage from the ancient d'Urbervilles is being exploited by Alec d'urberville, the fake one staking his claim to the same ancestry. Critics like Howe perceive a deep significance in Alec's unauthorised use of the d'Urberville name:

"That these cousins are not authentic offshoots of the aristocratic line, but arriviste bourgeois who have sought their

way into the gentry and appropriated the name as a decoration, is a fine stroke"<sup>25</sup>

Brown comments:

" The appearance of the spurious country squire adds to the sense of jeopardy...Alongside this image, there unfolds that of the old father's discovery of his ancient but unavailing ancestry: a disclosure of the community's past which helps to define what Tess represents in the ensuing tale, at the same time as it sharpens the intrusive invading quality in Alex d'Urberville."<sup>26</sup>

Hardy's castigation of the historical d'Urberville is characteristic enough. The ancestors of Tess emerge in hideous and terrifying portraits. Their conduct is nothing less than hideous as Tess is seduced:

'One may, indeed, admit the possibility of a retribution lurking in the present catastrophe. Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time.'<sup>27</sup>

Alec thus slips into the role of his namesakes, the ruthless aristocrats who revelled their entire life time seducing, exploiting and victimising girls like Tess. The class relationship of the exploiter and victim goes unhindered down the generations. The final disastrous stroke of the Male Ego on the subjugated female is brought out through stark irony as Tess's family is turned out:

'Thus the Durbeyfields, once d'Urbervilles, saw descending upon them the destiny which, no doubt, when they were among the Olympians of the country, they had caused to descend many a time, and severely enough, upon the heads of such landless ones as they themselves were now.'<sup>28</sup>

The tragedy becomes all the more pathetic when women are the only actors left on the scene to suffer for the follies of the Male Ego and its dominance. It may be observed that John Durbeyfield makes his dubious ancestry, an excuse not to support his family. The Male Ego takes extra care to see that, he drives the life of Tess into jeopardy to safeguard his own whimsical fantasies. He literally drives Tess into the hands of the waiting villain to complete the circle of her destruction:

'He'll marry her, most likely, and make a lady of her; and then she'll definitely linked with a rise or fall in the social scale here as elsewhere.'

Nowhere else does Tess of the d'Urbervilles comes closer to Thalamurakai than here. Chamiarappan, the landlord, recounts the past when he seduced the charming field worker and birth of the illegitimate child:

' God, the atheist's god, filled the Prakriti and Purusha with temptations. Art, music, Gita and meditation became the backdrop of a sexual orgy. He met honey coloured wife of Maruthan the labourer. The honey colour of Cherumi enveloped her like a cream. Forgetting the surroundings, forgetting the spectators, Chamiarappan flirted with the beloved of Maruthan. Brahmapada is ecstatically dancing. In that dance the dualities are fused, Ardha-nareeshwara.'<sup>29</sup>

Chamiarappan recapitulates the bitter enmity between Ponmudi and Kizhakkupuram over the male offspring. In the Patriarchal hierarchy, rival families realise the importance of having a male child to carry on the line of succession unbroken, whereas, they can virtually forget the female child:

'For every Male child born to the progenitors of Chamiarappan, Kizhakkupuram stirred itself in self-consuming jealousy and hatred. The jealousy grew into strife, malady and sorcery. Kizhakkupuram sought the aid of black magic

and witchcraft. The forefathers of Chamiarappan watched in horror and angst. ' 30

In another instance, Kanippadan poses a disturbing question to Chamiarappan which exposes the arrogance of the Male Ego, and its nonchalance in violating the honour of women:

'You bought all the lands of Ponmudi from the Nairs? But ever thought about the numerous Nair women violated in that transaction?' 31

### **LICENTIOUSNESS AND IMMORALITY OF THE MALE EGO**

In Hardy and Vijayan, the Male Ego tends to characterise the unfaithfulness of woman as an unpardonable offence, whereas the men folk can carry on their amorous acts with perfect ease. Angel is no longer in his angelic self when he suggests to Izz Huett that she may go to Brazil with him. He carries the conviction with him that, the proposal is all right to him, when he would have watched any such gesture on the part of Tess with horror and trepidation.

Angel is notably inconsistent, too. He is later tempted to take Liz Huett with him to Brazil as his mistress because he feels cynical about women and would be "revenged on society." Angel cannot perceive the irony of such a double standard, as well as its patent falsity. He complains about the social ordinances of marriage as restrictive, when his own concept of "purity" in his wife binds him more securely than the law. Angel is self-alienated like Henchard, though not self-destructive. In this respect there is much similarity between him, Clym and Jude. Apart from Jude, he is the most complex and contradictory of Hardy's characters.

It brings to the fore the irresponsibility of the male in playing with feelings deeper than his own. It may be noted that, here it is the innate honesty of a

simple woman like Izz Huett that saves the situation for women. It is also worthwhile to note here that all women characters in the novel have a shared field of experience. At some point of time, all of them have the bitter experience of the arrogance and selfishness of the Male Ego.

Tess, Marian and Izz discover a deep solidarity through their collective experience of rejection and suffering. They enable them to shield themselves against the bullying farmer. Compared to the male counterparts, their action reveal unselfishness and humane understanding of the situation they are entrapped in:

*'A woman should not be try'd beyond her Strength, and continual dropping will wear away a Stone-ay, more, a Diamond.'*<sup>32</sup>

These episodes bear comparable analogy with the immoral act of Kittappan virtually buying Sreedevi, the wife of another man and a mother of two in Thalamurakal:

*'Sreedevi folded her palms, felt the leather bag with face and arms. Her face brightened...'*

*'You may decide how this exchange can be done with the Translator, her husband. At any cost I should get Ambika...not as concubine but as second wife.'*<sup>33</sup>

### **MARRIAGE WITHOUT ITS SACRED IDEALS**

For the female characters in Hardy and Vijayan, marriage seldom means its ennobling religious sense. In both novelists, marriage very often degenerates into an insipid affair, without emotional involvement and participation.

Here marriage is no longer the consummation of love and longings. On the contrary it is partly an escape from the intolerable social pressures. When such an artificial union breaks down, Tess must inevitably return to drudgery at Flintcomb Ash.

The situation becomes all the more harsh and bewildering when it is observed that, it is the elder women like the Tess's mother who act as a willing accomplice to such unethical proposals, to escape the stringent economic position and for the betterment of the social status. It is too late when Tess realises the harm her mother's fantasy brought on her:

'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...but I never had the chance o'learning in that way, and you did not help me!'<sup>34</sup>

In Thalamurakai, there is a glaring instance of the avarice of the mother pushing the daughter into the marriage with a man old enough to be her father. Here too the female becomes a silent victim of the machinations of the society's malignant motives:

'Generations back, Ittooliamma commanded her daughter to appear before her. The daughter named Kochikkutti stood before the without abandoning the courage. Beneath the nagapadam, the throbbing breasts, the red stain of pan on her lips, on the feet the graffiti of Mailanchi.'

'O girl', said Ittooliamma, ' your marriage has been decided by me'

....

'...the eldest doyen of Chalil Tharavadu. Nobody is sure how many times he married...but the buffoon who enjoyed so many women may enthral you too'<sup>35</sup>

Thus in both the novels, women become victims of the custom of marriage. There is no one, either men or even their own mothers, who may offer redemption to these women.

### **MALE EGOS DERIVES PRIDE FROM ITS VILLAINY**

The Male Ego seems to derive a strange kind of contentment in masquerading himself as an incorrigible villain, bringing about the undoing of women. They are too interested in flaunting this label of relentless masochism in the social circles. The reason may be society's own unwillingness to oppose the traditional image of man as someone who is born to dominate and oppress the weaker sex.

Alec never considers his behaviour as disgraceful. The Male dominated society projects him as the Arcadian stereotype. The community itself willingly delivers Tess into his hands. As the women return home from their weekly drunken orgy, instead of rescuing a member of their own clan, they attribute heroic coloration to Alec. This is evident from their remarks:

' because th'beest first favourite with He just now', and then  
roaring with laughter when she escapes with him' out of the  
frying pan into the fire' <sup>36</sup>

In Thalamurakal, the primeval community of the Palakkad countryside never denounces the amorous exploits of Appukkaravar and Kandathu Nair. On the other hand they are elevated to the status of folk heroes. The community gives vent into its poetic genius by composing ballads and paeans to these self-proclaimed heroes of female seduction and exploitation:

'As she was about to get down from the bed, Appukkaravar  
prevented.'

'You recite.'

'O forbidden, it should not be recited like this', as she tried to  
put on the saree, she pleaded,' let me cover my nudity'

' No need of clothes-'

Sacred moment of the early dawn. The pathetic tone of  
Sivakami filled that bedroom,'Om bhur bhuav swam-'<sup>37</sup>

### **THE MALE EGO'S REFUSAL TO HONOUR THE FEMALE SELF**

The male protagonists both in Hardy and Vijayan are unwilling to recognise the exclusive identity of the female self. There is almost a paranoiac indifference to the female perception of the world. For Alec d'Urberville as well as Chamiarappan, the female is a biological organism whose behavioural traits and perceptions can be generalised and taken for granted. They stubbornly refuse to identify the female as a thinking, breathing being. Both Alec and Angel Clare insist that Tess is representative of her sex. For Alec she is not different from the clan called female sex:

'I didn't understand your meaning till it was too late.'

'That's what every woman says.'

'How can you dare to use such words!' she cried...

'My god! I could knock you out of the gig! Did it never strike your mind that what every woman says some women feel?' <sup>38</sup>

Angel Clare's own Ego refuses to grant Tess, her authentic self. He tends to project Tess as his own fabulous unreal fancies dictate:

She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form.

He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them.

'Call me Tess,' she would say askance; and he did.' <sup>39</sup>

In Thalamurakal, the same contempt for womanhood surfaces in the exchange between the Nazi soldier and Gopalan:

"She?" Asks the Nazi soldier

"Yes," Imthias Hussain says, " She is Jessica, my wife."

Soldier spits in the face of Gopalan. Imthias cried in anguish. Nazi Soldier thundered, " You who dared to challenge Aryans, How comes it that you have a wife? Call her concubine. One who multiplies the numbers of the low castes. Otherwise call her the prostitute." <sup>40</sup>

### **POLITICAL REALITIES, WHICH OPPRESS WOMEN**

In Tess and Thalamurakai, the male oppressors make use of the strenuous political and economic realities of the respective times to subjugate women. The Male Ego systematically avoids all opportunities for the female members to emerge out of the constraints of the social scenario, which captivates and confines their movements beyond that limit.

Tess, in spite of the attributes, is presented as a typical representative of her class. She merges with the surroundings as a field woman. Hardy narrates her contours blending with the surrounding scenario:

' A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lose her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it.' <sup>41</sup>

The novelist subtly drives home the image of the woman as a passive suffering figure, extremely vulnerable to the male tormentors. The potent symbolism of Tess getting reduced to a mere sexual object is highly explicit. The male protagonists of Hardy like Clym, Jude and Henchard engage themselves in active struggles against their destiny. They relentlessly strive to eke out a niche for themselves in the world.

But the female characters miserably fail to find an outlet. This renders them pathetic and tragic figures. They find themselves on the road to victimisation and exploitation by the male chauvinists. The predictable disaster of sexual domination and destruction overhangs their fate.

We can discern the strains of a similar story in Thalamurakai when, towards the end of the novel, Chamiarappan recounts the saga of Ponmudi to Raghava Menon:

"Raghava, do you remember in which forms Class Struggle took place in Ponmudi?"

" Remember everything. From Krishnan Uncle's Sanskrit struggle to class rape of Ambika, rationalism to sorcery, to Pavithran's inertia. I am the first bird of this Kilippattu."

"Ganapathikali," laughed Chamiarappan.<sup>1 42</sup>

### **THE MALE EGO AND CLASS STRUCTURE**

Having been beneficiaries of the Patriarchal culture, over centuries, the male protagonists perpetrate their worst offence against women. The Male Ego alienates women from one another, by creating the myth of Class structure. The Male members of the society with aristocratic pretensions look down upon women, who traditionally belong to the lower strata of society, like the field woman. This attitude of condescension creates inhibitions in the female members making them targets of exploitation.

Tess's attempt to contact Angel's parents meet with pathetic failure because of this inhibition. In her moment of desperation, she has to make the unwarranted comparison between herself and Mercy Chant, the 'ladylike young woman' they wanted him to marry. Mercy inhabits a height unattainable by the women of the

social cadre of Tess. She has always been immune from the coarser sexual and social pressures.

The collective fear induced in the field-woman by the aristocratic Male Ego is so vast and extensive that other girls like Marian and Izz too realise its ominous portents. They discover a deep solidarity through the shared experience of work on the land, of rejection and suffering. Their act of requesting Angel to come back to Tess, while highlighting their humane quality, brings to the fore the subconscious fear of the female, that centuries of oppression had created.

Thalamurakal abounds in innumerable exploits of the landlords of Ponmudi against the women of subservient social classes. Here also, women from the aristocracy are relatively immune from the onslaught. The feudalist male, with his inherent arrogance and unflinching faith in the social mores of his own class, unleashes a series of sexual violations against the unprotected women:

'Kittappan drew that miracle which stood on the tripod to his eyes and said, " Oh mariner, grant me an exception. I will grab the frocks of those women who frolic in the cascade like a Krishna, sitting here on this hilltop. " <sup>43</sup>

### **TYRANNY OF THE MALE EGO OVER THE FEMALE WILL**

Though the two novels dealt with here have as their backdrops social scenarios and time kaleidoscopes that are different, there is a perceptible space of ideological similarities. The male protagonists of both novels are ardent believers in the male hierarchical pattern of the family and society. All the male characters from Alec and Angel to Chamiarappan and Komappan systematically avoid all possibilities to bring the female counterparts into active communion with the world around them.

In the genealogy of both *d'Urbervilles* and *Ponmudi*, no woman character of consequence is ever mentioned. *Tess* and *Thalamurakai* predominantly turn out to be sagas of male chivalry, exploits and acts of oppression against the female consciousness. The opinion of the female is seldom sought at any instance in these novels.

In both the novels, the Male Ego rejects the ethics of the society and unabashedly strives to create private ethics for himself. At the same time, it insists on the female to stick on to antediluvian norms of ethics. While Angel can conveniently ignore his own amorous deeds in the past, he seek pristine womanly chastity in Tess. Alec flagrantly violates all social mores with impunity and seeks in Tess a passive instrument for the satiation of lust.

*Thalamurakai* exposes a Patriarchal hierarchy where Cheriappan, the ageing doyen of Ponmudi can marry a girl in her twenties and put to death Theethai, the lower cast boy who dared to make love to her. The novels ponder at length the sagas of Kittappan, Appukaranavar and Komappan unleashing their masculine haughtiness on the women of Palakkad countryside.

In *Tess*, the tragedy is caused by the male ego's slavish and idiosyncratic adherence to a questionable family title. By the time its dubiousness is revealed, it is too late to alter the tragic course, which the female protagonist has, began to tread. While the male characters are blissfully safe from the onslaught in its aftermath, it becomes the destiny of Tess to carry forth its unbearable tragedy. She becomes the sole actor in the tragedy the male chauvinists have scripted for her.

In *Thalamurakai*, the male actors cling on to a family name in a similar vein. Here the title is authentic and real. But Ponmudi, the ancestral house of Chamiarappan must crumble down under its own weight. Essentially Ponmudi epitomises the fortress of several Male Egos who constituted the forefathers of Chamiarappan. Ponmudi cautions itself against granting the women folk their due.

Behind the veil of the prosperity and affluence of Ponmudi, there looms large the hoary tales of violence, seduction and sorcery. Ponmudi's history is replete with exploited, victimised and dehumanised women.

From the close reading of these two novels, it emerges that the Male Ego is a Socio-Psychological phenomenon that defies the geographical, time and cultural milieus. Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Thalamurakai, which belong to two divergent socio-cultural spaces, portray the behavioural traits of the Male in a light that extremely contrasts with each other.

So it would be an exposition of the deepest truth to state that the Male Ego has its beginnings in some unrecorded facet of human civilisation and it is manifested in different aspects and variations with the evolution of time. In spite of all might of the forces and movements that attempted to kill the giant, the Male Ego continues exert its tyrannous and overwhelming influence over the female will.

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### **NOTES**

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