

THE DOMINANCE OF THE MALE EGO IN THE

NOVELS OF

THOMAS HARDY AND O.V.VIJAYAN

-A COMPARATIVE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy was an English poet and his nation's foremost regional novelist, whose most impressive novels are set in ' Wessex', an imaginary country in South West England.

Hardy was the son of Thomas Hardy, builder and master mason, and Jemima Born Hann. Both were long- established Dorset families. The writer was the eldest of four children. Though rather delicate in childhood, by the age of eight, he was able to enter the new village school at Bockampton. After one year, he left to enter a Non conformist school at Dorchester, and when the headmaster opened " The Academy", a more ambitious school in the town, Hardy went with him. This master was a talented Latinist and aroused in Hardy a love for the classical writers that was to have a marked influence on his work.

Leaving school in 1856, Hardy became a pupil of an architect and Church-restorer named John Hicks, who practised in Dorchester. At this time and for some time after, Hardy read widely with a view to taking Holy Orders.

In 1862 he left Dorchester for London and soon obtained a post with a well-known architect Arthur Bloomfield (later Sir Arthur), as a Gothic draftsman, capable of designing and restoring churches and rectories. He remained with Bloomfield until

1867, when deterioration in health compelled him to return to Dorset, where he again worked for Hicks.

During his years in London, Hardy had begun seriously to write poetry. Some of the poems of this period are among his finest and most characteristic works. It is notable that there is no line of development in Hardy's poetry from immaturity to maturity, followed by a falling-off; at any period his best and inferior work are found mixed, and his style undergoes no significant change. During 1867-68, he wrote his first novel, The Poor Man and His Lady.

In 1910 Hardy was awarded the Order of Merit. On November 27, 1912, Mrs. Hardy died. In 1914 Hardy married his secretary, Florence Emily Dugdale, who survived and wrote his biography. He continued to write poetry till death. His ashes were placed in Westminster Abbey and his heart buried as he had wished in the church at Stanford, near his birthplace. Hardy remains one of the most widely read Victorian novelists, and his work has been the basis of a number of critical essays and monographs.

NOVELS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

1. The Mayor of Casterbridge (1883)
2. Tess of the D'urbervilles (1891)
3. Jude the Obscure (1896)
4. The Return of the Native (1878)
5. Far From the Madding Crowd (1874)

O.V.VIJAYAN

Oottupulackal Velukkty Vijayan was born in 1931 in Palakkad, Kerala. His father O.Velukkuty was an officer in Malabar Special Police. Vijayan grew up in a camp of armed constabulary, which his father commanded. He had no formal education till the age of twelve and spent this period at home reading fairy tales.

The writer had his education in Palakkad till fourth form. The later stages of his school education were at Koduvayoor Board High School and Palakkad

Government High School. He did his B.A English Literature in Government Victoria College, Palakkad and M.A.English Literature at Madras Presidency College, Madras.

Once he described Victoria College as the 'monument of my repentance'. He remembers as having involved himself in futile political and literary enterprises during this period. During these days he involved himself in the activities of Student Congress, Kerala Socialist Party and Communist Party.

For some time, the writer worked as a lecturer in English in Malabar Christian College, Tanjavur Arts College and Government Victoria College Palakkad. He worked as a political Cartoonist in Sankar's weekly in 1958 and Patriot in 1963. Vijayan has been working as a freelance journalist since 1967.

Vijayan is one of the major influences in Malayalam novel. He has published six novels, three novellas, five collections of short stories and several books of political essays.

NOVELS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY

1. Khasakinte Ithihasam (1969)
2. Dharmapuram (1985)
3. Gurusagaram (1989)
4. Pravachakante Vazhi (1992)
5. Thalamurakal (1997)

MAJOR INFLUENCES

THOMAS HARDY

Hardy was the child of his time, the product of the scientific view that was developing throughout his lifetime. Between 1800 and 1900, the sciences of sociology and psychology, of geology and palaeontology, of archaeology and anthropology were virtually invented. In seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nature was perceived

in terms of a pastoral convention. The Romantics formalised it, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. To this Hardy added the scientific view, especially as formulated by Charles Darwin.

Hardy lived in a world of religious controversy in which, in spite of the assaults it had to sustain, religion showed itself to be extremely vigorous. Religion and science are perhaps the keys to the intellectual background of Hardy's writings.

Perhaps the most perceptible influence on Hardy was Arthur Schopenhauer, considered as one of the most original thinkers. Hardy shared his ideals of and perceptions like pessimism, dislike of Christianity, interest in art, desire for stasis and the like with Schopenhauer. The essential doctrine of Schopenhauer is a doctrine of the will, and it involves a metaphysical distinction between appearance and reality, in which all that is normally called real becomes phenomenal. The real individual will is distinguished from recognisable acts of volition and is identified with the cosmic will, and the Cosmic Will is evil.

The cardinal principle of agnosticism that 'theology' and 'morals' were different things, found a subscriber in Hardy. Hardy was in the true tradition of Agnosticism when he denied that there was any such thing as Providence, a force, which saw to it that everything in the world worked towards good.

O.V VIJAYAN

The pristine and ancient landscape of Palakkad unquestionably remains the greatest influence in the making up of the novelist. The primeval landscape surfaces in his novels and short stories with unflinching frequency.

In his career as a novelist and columnist, Vijayan had to witness the tumultuous upheavals that the world around him underwent, like the disintegration of the old feudal families, the communist upsurge, the formation of the first communist government in Kerala and the declaration of Emergency in 1975.

The writer was a staunch believer in the ennobling and humane qualities of communism during his student days. But the gradual erosion of the

communist ideals and the dictatorial nature of the communist regimes elsewhere in the world left him a disillusioned Marxist.

The novelist's first love and fascination for cartoons, especially political strip cartoons influenced his character creation to some extent. There is a visible mark of strip cartoons in many of the character creations of Vijayan.

In the later period of his creative life as a litterateur, there is a discernible shift towards mysticism and spirituality. Vijayan's works in recent years register a shift of allegiance to matters of the soul and spirit bordering on a kind of discipleship to the ascetic, Sri.Karunakara Guru of Pothencodu Ashram.

MALE EGO

This treatise proposes to explore the Dominance of the Male Ego in the novels of Thomas Hardy and O.V.Vijayan. The term Male Ego implies not only the person, but the authority, the central position and unquestionable Patriarchal social structure that gives the male a transcendent role in the family and society at large

There may be traced several factors behind this factor of the Male Ego, ranging from the centuries of customs to superstitious beliefs. The Patriarchal system that prevailed all over the world constantly strove to reduce the female to the position of a non-entity. The female's legitimate place of honour and her status in society were hardly ever given due attention. Her role was often considered to be subservient to man's.

In this way, while the Male Ego and personality were asserted and blown out of proportion, the Female Ego was completely overlooked and her separate identity ceased to exist. Resurgence of the Female ego and assertion of that identity in society and literature are a recent phenomenon.

The natural aftermath of over dominance is the creation of a mentality characterised by revolt, alienation and indifference. An unconscious libidinous self characterises man's psychosexual behaviour.

ATTITUDES ADOPTED BY THE NOVELISTS

Hardy felt at times that women's importance lay in the possession of a power and significance that they did not understand and did not try to control. Yet all around he perceived the working of a society which made nothing of this and seemed dedicated to treating women in such a way as to reduce them into least worthy vessels of masculine needs and desires.

In the world of Hardy's novels, his sympathies lie with the women who must struggle with the dual morality imposed upon them by society. It is a fact of their lives, which they accept in one sense, but the circumstances of their life inspire them to fight against it for their personal survival. In their individual ways, they try to deal with it—some are overwhelmed by it, some compromise and gain a shallow and unsatisfactory solution, and some fight and triumph in defeat.

In both the novelists, the dominant Male Ego tends to see the female as the object to be seduced and cater to its uncontrollable sexual fantasies. The Dominance of the Male Ego in both the novelists leads to the rejection of the ethically ordered universe. It shapes some of their most deeply rooted and habitual attitudes towards life. In both, the male characters are in pursuit of the unexplored morality of life.

Hardy's tragic figures and Vijayan's protagonists are rooted in an unconscious life-process, more deterministic than their own. They try to mould their lives according to their own set of values, belief systems, personal will and aspiration. These tendencies gradually lead them to exert their will on others, especially on members of the weaker sex.

In both novelists, characters' close and conscious relationship to unconscious nature defines the hope that is contained in the tragic suffering. Their greatest novels are tragic actions, which demonstrate the incomplete evolutionary state of man, a throb of the universal pulse, suffering as the pioneer of a more compassionate cosmic awareness.

REVIEW OF THE WORK DONE EARLIER

The major bulk of the work done earlier tends to analyse the philosophic, artistic and sociological aspects of these two novelists.

THOMAS HARDY

Lionel Johnson is perhaps the best-known academic critic of Hardy. The major preoccupation of the critic seems to be the narrative techniques and sociological reality of the Wessex landscape.

Dale Krammer, another luminary in Hardy Scholarship deals with the techniques of narration. Helen Garwood is perhaps the first critic to explore the profound influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy. Marxian School's leading luminary J.C.Maxell, analyses the impact of industrialisation in Hardy's novels.

One of the remarkable additions to the Hardy critical library is the brilliant analysis of D.H.Lawrence on the ethical system in Hardy.

Michael Millgate is perhaps the most authoritative voice in Hardy Criticism in modern times. His intensive analyses of Hardy's novels have to be seen in a new perspective. His study of Tess provides deep insights into the complex nature of the feminine psyche.

O.V.VIJAYAN

Asha Menon explores the predominant motifs of Khasakinte Ithihasam like agnosticism, transcendentalism, and transmigration of soul, escapism, masochism and realisation of the soul. The critic explores the strange relationship between sex and death in the fiction of O.V.Vijayan. He finds analogies for Ravi in Herman Hess's Siddhardha and Maugham's Laury.

V.Rajakrishnan traces the Biblical allusions, images and associations in the major works of Vijayan. He discerns the strains of Associational Fantasy and being towards death in Khasakinte Ithihasam.

P.K.Rajasekharan goes to the depths of the dominant image of the father, in the novels of Vijayan. He finds the basic themes and leit-motifs having analogies in the multitude of life's colours.

K.P.Appan analyses the socio-political equations in O.V.Vijayan in the book Marunna Malayalam Novel. He goes into details of the social, spiritual and other factors that influenced the creative writings of O.V.Vijayan. The critic concentrates on the transformations and evolutions Vijayan underwent during the post Emergency period.

In spite of the profound and in-depth study and analysis made by these critics in Hardy and Vijayan scholarship, the area and scope of the present treatise, viz, 'The Dominance of the Male Ego' happens to be an unexplored area. So this study proposes to be original and path breaking.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The treatise proposes to proceed by exploring the novels under study, according to the following procedure:

Method of Narration in Hardy and Vijayan

The study will analyse all the nuances and subtleties of the narrative techniques of the two novelists. Both the novelists adopt a multiplicity of narrative devices and patterns. On most occasions they deviate from the conventional and predictive pattern of the narrative techniques. Focusing on the techniques of narration may help to bring out the inherent complexities and contradictions of the characters.

The narrative pattern also helps to bring out the psychological realism of the characters. The study may seek the help of psychological theories and hypotheses to make a realistic account of the scenario and character depicted there. Colloquial and sometimes avant-garde techniques as well as the highly

poetic and picturesque narrative devices will be dealt with at length and substance in this treatise.

Plots as may be perceptible in Hardy and Vijayan

Another area, which will be thoroughly analysed in this treatise, will be the conception of plot in the two novelists. Both the novelists are seen to have given excessive care to the plot. The near neurotic obsession with the novelists to revise their plots many times before publication is a topic that should be paid proper introspection. It is significant that both the novelists used to publish their novels in periodicals before it was published in the book form. It is obvious that this practice put some constraints and compulsions on both of them.

Character and Role of Character in their Novels

Hardy and Vijayan devoted extreme care to see that the characters evolve on their own, into full-fledged and self-defining characters. All their characters are meticulously designed and immaculately conceived. Their traits, ideologies and ethos are a result of a life time endeavour and the comprehension of the deep currents of existence and its impart.

This treatise proposes to analyse all the aspects and manifestations of the characters and character traits that may help to evince the leit- motif, viz, the Dominance of the Male Ego.

In several instances, the character may imbibe some or several of the peculiarities of his generation, at the same time being deeply individualised. Generally the characters of Hardy are conceived on a grandiose scale, bearing deep imprints and dimensions of epic personages. Vijayan's characters have about them a certain deceptive simplicity. The characters of both novelists may severely evade any attempt at generalisation. It would be futile and sacrilegious to demystify them with clichéd and hackneyed metaphors.

Philosophical Outlooks and Views of Life, that Influenced Their Interest in Life and Character.

It would be impossible for a character to assume the totality of being without having deep philosophical perception and outlook on the phenomena of life. To a certain extent they may be imbued with certain ideas of the author. It would be almost impossible to create a character who is entirely alienated from the life and situation of the author. Hardy was in the habit of coming out of the apparent mask of the author at several instances in the novels to put forth an ideology that ferrets out of the deepest recess of his being. Hardy's characters seem to talk explicitly and implicitly their creator's perceptions about life.

The Protagonists of Vijayan rarely talk about themselves. Pregnant pauses, deep and profound intervals of silences and reveries mark the canvas of the creative world of Vijayan. It is a world of resilience and withdrawal. It may require vast amounts energy and introspection to bring out the life's philosophy of the characters of Vijayan.

On the basis of the analysis, the treatise will try to discover how and why the Male Ego dominates. The Research will investigate the factors that lead to this dominance. It will further analyse the effects of this dominance on characters directly or indirectly related to the dominant male.

In this way the research will try to discover the similarities in character, influence and effects.

Thus this study, it is hoped, will give a better insight into the novels of Thomas Hardy and O.V.Vijayan.
