

## Chapter One

# **THE MAKING OF THE NOVELISTS**

## **ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCES AT WORK**

### **THOMAS HARDY**

#### **AGNOSTICISM**

Hardy refused to accept the tenets of Orthodox Christianity. The Hardian protagonists are in the perennial struggle between conforming to the ecclesiastical conventions and seeking out a private ethos for themselves. Traditional criticism has often termed the peculiar position adopted by Hardy as one bordering Agnosticism.

The biblical understanding of God was based upon the idea of the freedom of the Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of the world. The implicit faith in miracles and the concept that God could suspend the natural order or break the causal chain is part of this belief. It gradually carried on to the presumption that human reason could define and manipulate the transcendent.

This gradually led to two polarities. At one extreme, God was declared the progenitor of all evils. On the other side, all evils were given a sanctified place. This turned out to be antithetical to the cardinal spirit of Christianity. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's treatment of the suffering of children in The Brothers Karamazov is a classical instance of this struggle of Agnosticism.

Many of the protagonists of Hardy experience this struggle of Agnosticism. Tess's apparently sacrilegious act of the midnight baptism of her baby,

Jude's profane ecclesiastic sermon in the tavern, Sue furtively smuggling pagan icons into her dwelling, are all instances of this agnostic quest in Hardy.

### **DETERMINISM**

Hardy seems to subscribe to the view that the human destiny seems to be controlled by dark, mysterious forces that manipulate each and every moment of existence. The spell of deterministic philosophy is well pronounced in Hardy.

Determinism is a theory that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by previously existing causes that preclude free will and the possibility that man could have acted otherwise. The theory holds that the universe is utterly rational because the complete knowledge of any given situation assures that unerring knowledge of its future is also possible.

The majority of the Hardian fiction reveals pronounced leanings towards the deterministic view of life. The deterministic outlook provides him with a powerful means for dramatic situations, so long as he does not try to explain it to the readers. Frederick Karl makes the observation:

"... At the poetic level, Hardy is capable of tragedy, although when he thinks philosophically he seems commonplace and his limitations become obvious."<sup>1</sup>

If at any given moment, the human perception is capable of extending its comprehension to the operating forces of nature, the uncertainties regarding the future and the past will become non-existent. The Persian poet Omar Khayyam expresses a similar deterministic view of the world in the concluding half of one of his quatrains in Rubiyaat:

" And the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last dawn of Reckoning shall read."<sup>2</sup>

## **CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALITIES**

As is obvious in the case of most of the novelists and the poets, the prevailing socio-political scenario may create deep imprints in their ideology and character creation. Hardy's novels reveal the deep and abiding influence of some of the most important social developments, conflicts and contradictions as he witnessed in the Victorian society around him.

Jude the Obscure offers a perspective of the contemporary history of nineteenth century by offering the social critic's insight into issues like the isolation of the individual, the collapse of old values, and the groping towards new ones. According to Eugene Goodheart, the book anticipates Freudian theories and the Second World War, the two turning points, which had left indelible, imprints on the consciousness of last century.

Eugene Goodheart comments:

" Hardy's novels are in a sense demonstrations of the inadequacy of the Romantic conception... Hardy, though possessing the old Romantic feeling for personality, shared the Victorian burden of society... The dates of his birth and death, 1840-1928, dramatise the situation. By temperament a Romantic, he was born too late to be one. Born too early to be a modern, he lived too far into the modern period, sharing to some extent its awareness, to be considered a true Victorian." <sup>3</sup>

A close reading of Jude the Obscure brings to light the formative influences on Hardy, the novelist. Every aspect of life seems to have held his interest: nature, time, society, institutions, religion and heredity. Hardy's total awareness of man and his universe get projected in Jude. Jude's desire for learning springs from his nobler instincts, but it is also related to his time. The social unrest is an artificial product of civilisation but it is also the force that sets off Jude to seek the fulfilment of his ambition.

The social formulas have to do with the sum total of designs that make up the fabric of society. They set the patterns of economics, educational opportunities, jurisdiction, public opinion and conventions, but more important still they are conditioned by religion and intellectual accomplishment. Christminster represents the centre of these two spheres.

### **SCHOPENHAUER**

One of the greatest and most powerful influences on Hardy was the idealism of Schopenhauer, as is evident in many of his letters and character creations. In Schopenhauer, Hardy found a philosopher who attempted to explain existence: consciousness was an evolutionary error, and so, in a sense, was individuation, the separation of the individual from the mass.

Jude's "groping in the dark" can be seen as a dramatisation of Schopenhauer's irrational and impulsive Will to live: incessantly seeking contentment through connection but more often finding pain in thwarted connections.

Hardy was profoundly fascinated by Schopenhauer's view of consciousness as an evolutionary blunder. In the novels he explores his own sense of the needless pain and the futility of existence. F.B.Pinion makes the observation:

' Schopenhauer's solution to the "quietening" of the will, informed by Buddhist asceticism, Franciscan transcendence, as well as Kantian idealism, provided Hardy with a philosophical explanation for the moments wherein Jude (and, of course, Hardy himself, according to his autobiography) felt a longing to liberate his spirit from imprisonment of his body: to travel into the realms of the dead, as he does early in Part Second at night among the ghosts of Christminster.'<sup>4</sup>

### **PERCEY BYSSHE SHELLEY**

Most of the Hardy scholars are of the view that Shelley's influence on Hardy's thought and basic outlook was greater than that of any other writer. During the mid 1860's Hardy read Shelley with great assiduity and zeal. F.B.Pinion makes the observation:

" In his poetry he found an exhilarating freedom and intellectual intrepidity, a scientific view of the universe consistent with Darwinism, and the principles for social reform which were to make him sympathetic to much in the writings of Comte and later philosophers. Shelley's ideas helped enormously to free Hardy from the shackles of convention." <sup>5</sup>

Hardy was mystified by Shelley's lyricism. He described Shelley as 'our most marvellous lyricist'. He pursued the poetry and life of Shelley with a rare curiosity. He told his secretary Miss O'Rourke that he was the poet whom, above all others, he wished to have met, and many Shelleyan quotations and allusions are to be found in his works.

Shelley's rebellion against the blind and tyrannical powers explicitly responsible for the cruelty of Nature and the plight of man made the greatest and profound influence on Hardy. Hardy's embodiment of Christian charity in Tess is seen to have been inspired by Shelleyan counselling of 'Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance' in Prometheus Unbound.

Hardy was deeply drawn to Queen Mab, considered as the repository of most of Shelley's philosophical and revolutionary thought. Hardy's 'Cause of Things' bears considerable analogy with the Shelley's work in that, both represent Nature as neutral or amoral, loveless and hateless, devoid of any qualifications.

The sarcastic and tragic search for the Idea in one woman after another is the theme of The Well-Beloved and The Woodlanders. The sculptor Jocelyn Pierston is a victim of the Vision, the 'migratory, elusive idealization he called his Love' having flitted from human shell to human shell an indefinite number of times' before taking up its first abode in the first Avic when he is a young man of twenty. In both these novels the major source of inspiration and sustenance obviously is Shelley's 'Epipsychidion':

... towards the lodestar of my desire,  
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight  
Is as dead leaf's in the owlet light.

Angel Clare is yet another character who reveals the powerful influence of Shelley. He helps to bring out the inadequacy of the Shelleyan lover. His love for Tess can be described as 'imaginative and ethereal' after the ideal of Shelley. 'She was no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence.... He called her Artemis, Demeter...'; and he regards her as the embodiment of 'rustic innocence'. As soon as he finds the 'vision' of her 'mocked by appearances', he is overcome by an antipathy, which 'warps' his soul. Thus Angel Clare brings out the essence of the Shelleyan ideal and influence in Hardy.

### **WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

It is widely accepted that after Shelley, it is the Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality that exerted a great influence on Hardy. Horace Moule gave Hardy a copy of The Golden Treasury in January 1862, which contained Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality. This may have been Hardy's first acquaintance with the poem. Explicit or concealed quotations from the poem are seen mainly in six of his novels.

The irresistible Wordsworthian spell is visible in the depressing contrast between the reality and childhood dreams of Jude. Like Wordsworth, Jude's dreams of his childhood are filled with the ideal and the transcendental.

### **POSITIVISM**

The philosophy of Positivism is based on the assumption that nothing about God or existence beyond life on earth is knowable; its tenor was that the business of man is to do everything possible for the welfare and progress of the human race. Intrinsically Hardy always ardently held onto this philosophy. Hardy held George Eliot in great esteem as a positivistic philosopher.

Hardy's positivistic leanings become evident especially in Far From the Madding Crowd: 'If, as some thinkers hold, immortality consists in being enshrined in others' memories, then did Black Bess become immortal that day if she never had done so before.'

Hardy described Positivism as 'the new religion'. He agreed with J.S.Mill that Jesus was 'excellently fitted to aid and fortify that real, though purely human religion, which sometimes calls itself the Religion of Humanity'.

Hardy's own philosophy was rooted in Comte's Positivism. In a world of imperfection created by natural law, no God could be regarded as omnipotent. Since 'man is entirely subordinate to the world', progress depends on co-operation for the common good. Comte stresses the importance of altruism. In Hardy it appears as 'charity' or 'loving kindness'.

### **RATIONALISM**

The scientific temper, the advances made by technology and the discoveries made by science, which shook the very foundations of orthodox religion, influenced Hardy more than any other writer of his times. The Mayor of Casterbridge,

Two On a Tower, Jude the Obscure and many other novels offer innumerable examples of the scientific temper and the advent of new technology.

The rationalist mindset of Victorianism has one its best advocates in Hardy. Samuel Hynes makes the observation:

" Hardy was in the main line of Victorian rationalism, and it was this rationalism that maimed his imagination and divided his mind. It convinced him that knowledge was available to reason and logic, and that truth was that which is verifiable; it excluded the spiritual, the intuitive, the mystical; and it led him toward systematic thought for which he was unqualified either by natural bent or by training." <sup>6</sup>

### **WALTER PATER**

Hardy seems to have read and interested in Pater's studies concerning Renaissance, Studies in the History of Renaissance (1873). Pater's treatment of the conflict during Renaissance between Hellenism and Christianity, between desire for enjoyment and repose finds reflection in many works of Hardy like The Return of the Native and Jude the Obscure.

Pater stresses the isolation of the individual, 'each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world'. Hardy obviously was moved by the beauty and power of Pater's analysis of this idea. Ian Gregor makes the observation:

" He may have been jolted by a reference to Comte's 'facile orthodoxy', but the poet in him must have been reinvigorated by Pater's insistence on the primary value of a 'quickened, multiplied consciousness', and of the pre-eminence of vital experience over philosophy and abstract theory. Hardy's interest in scientific philosophy was too strong for him ever to

be as intensely exclusive as Pater. It moulded the thought of both, and carried Hardy into a world of speculation productive of inconsistent and unpopular points of view which he attempted to justify as 'seemings' that were intended to be a part of a coherent philosophy" <sup>7</sup>

### **VICTOR HUGO**

Hardy read Charles E. Wilbour's translation of Hugo's Les Miserables soon after its appearance in 1887. Hardy had immense respect for Hugo. He read most of his poetry and prose. The extensive notes he made while reading Les Miserables bears in many of the analogous scenes, situations and idealisms of the characters especially in novels like The Mayor of Casterbridge.

F.B. Pinion notes the extent of Hugo's influence on Hardy:

" To enhance the epic grandeur of his masterpiece, Hugo cunningly linked many minor structures (sometimes unusual solidity for a novel) to his main narrative edifice. Hardy's interest in one of them, the battle of Waterloo, was undoubtedly great... The impression made by certain scenes was so vividly cogent that features entered The Mayor of Casterbridge." <sup>8</sup>

### **MYTHS AND FOLKLORE**

Hardy was imbued with a lifelong fascination for the folklore and mythology of the peasants of Wessex. Time after time, in his fiction and shorter poems he gives evidence of this interest: in the "local Cereal" that opens Tess; the bonfires in the beginning of The Return of the Native; the "lineal descendants from jumbled Druidical rites and Saxton ceremonies"; the Midsummer revels in the Woodlanders; Bathsheba's divination with the Bible and key.

Ruth Firor makes the observation:

"Hardy's use of omens, dreams, premonitions, and fatality shows the sombre tinge of his mind, the saturation of the experiences of a long life in intimate contact with people who think in a primitive way." <sup>9</sup>

In her edition of Hardy's notebooks, Evelyn Hardy comments on this tendency:

"Hardy's mind was mythopoeic, as well as analytic, and although he continually strove to impose the dictates of reason, his interest in the occult, in the unconscious, and in myth and legend continued to obtrude, almost to his astonishment." <sup>10</sup>

### **LANDSCAPE OF WESSEX**

The landscape of Wessex exerted its magic spell on Hardy. Wessex is quite as much, or more, a creation of art as it is a record of reality. Wessex is shot through with the emotions and the significances of those who inhabit that space.

Hardy's landscapes show the readers the portrait of the invisible, the world of the inner states of being. It is based on observed actuality. Wessex is a symbolic microcosm like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha or like Conrad's Sulaco. The land breathes the essence of the tales that take place in it.

### **ARCHITECTURE**

Hardy's tutelage as an architect exerted a considerable sway over his technique and craft of novel writing. His novels reflect the famed Gothic philosophy of imperfection. His pride in novel writing was in his careful construction, a kind of working from an architectural blueprint. His critics like Lionel Johnson and Joseph

Warren Beach were particularly appreciative of this quality, with its symmetries, the balance of character against character and scene against scene. He wrote the novels with scrupulous exactitude of details, characteristic of an architect.

### **O.V.VIJAYAN**

Oottupulackal Velukkutti Vijayan was born in 1931 in Palakkad, Kerala. Vijayan spent his childhood in the camps of the armed constabulary, where his father was an officer. It is significant that he had no formal education till the age of twelve. Fairy tales and folklore constituted his reading material during this period.

The countryside of Palakkad, noted for its picturesque beauty, charm and magic, cast its spell over Vijayan. The Palmyra trees, the rocky hills and eastern wind recur throughout his novels and short stories.

In his career as a novelist and columnist, Vijayan had to witness and experience the great changes and upheavals that came over the society: disintegration of the old families, the communist upsurge, the formation of the first communist government and declaration of Emergency in 1975.

### **A DISILLUSTIONED COMMUNIST**

The writer had an ardent faith in the ennobling influence of communism during his student days. But the developments in the communist regimes all over the world, their unrealistic approach and the consequent loss of credentials, left him a disillusioned Marxist.

Vijayan had to witness the tumultuous changes in Kerala brought about by the communist party as well as the gradual demoralisation, which swept over the rank and file of the party and consequently the author was disillusioned with Marxism.

The loss of faith in the rejuvenating effect and humane quality of Marxism gets reflected in many novels of Vijayan.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE CARTOONIST**

Vijayan began his career as a political cartoonist. The technique and philosophy of the Cartoonist seem to influence the writer occasionally. Some of the characters in his novels and short stories bear a subtle analogy with the strip cartoon characters. The cartoonist has an inclination for minimalism in sketch while exaggerating some peculiar traits of character.

This aspect is especially evident in some of the political satires of Vijayan like Ente Charithranveshana Pareekshakal, which seeks to present numerous historical personages in contemporary light.

### **WORLD WAR II**

Like many young men of his generation, O.V.Vijayan was deeply puzzled by the ravages of the Second World War and the fissures it caused in the ideology of the universal man. His novels Madhuram Gayati, Thalamurakal, and Gurusagaram bring forth the agonies of war.

Vijayan shares the perception that a war is always fought for a dubious cause and nobody has ever won a war. Governments and totalitarian regimes engage in war to protect and safeguard their own narrow, parochial and partisan interests. The novelist explores the sufferings of the refugees of war in Gurusagaram, Pravachakante Vazhi and Dharmapuram.

## **THE BUDDHA**

The Buddha is an image and a metaphor that frequents the canvas of Vijayan. The compassionate image of the Bodhisattva offers hope of resurrection for the oppressed masses in Dharmapuranam. He names one of the characters of the novel as Siddhartha, the name of the youth who was the seeker of truth, who ultimately must become the Buddha. In Bodhisattva the novelist perceives the compassion extended to all the sentient beings.

In the character creation of Ravi, the protagonist of Khasakinte Itihhasam, Buddhist philosophy is at the subtle level of inspiration. Buddhism drew its sustenance from the basic dilemmas of existence. When Ravi refers to the vision behind every sight, he is alluding to the Buddhist metaphysics and mysticism. When Ravi says to himself, " While waiting at the last sea shore for the tide to arrive, I should not be chained by memories"<sup>11</sup>, he is touching the core of the Dependent Origination of the Buddha.

In all the novels of Vijayan, there is the suggestion that death is not the end of life. This is one of the important tenets of Buddhism. Buddha often talked about the transcendental consciousness that descends to man towards the end of life.

Some of the creations of Vijayan end by invoking the imagery of rain. Again, this belongs to one of the major precepts of Buddhism. In the Pure Land of Buddhism, the imagery of water is evoked which is constituted of eight qualities.

So it turns out that in the use of the imageries as well as in the idealistic notions, Buddha and his philosophy served as the source of inspiration to Vijayan.

## **JESUS CHRIST**

Christ is a discernible symbol and presence in many of the short stories and Novels of Vijayan. In Christ, Vijayan seems to discern a humane spirit moved to

agony and compassion, finding his fellow beings in suffering. Vijayan's Christ has been conspicuously stripped of all divine and magical paraphernalia.

This portrayal of Christ is visible in many short stories like Chengannur Vanti and the novel Gurusagaram, where the epic dimension of Christ's lived reality is brought forth.

### **NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS**

In a self-introspective analysis, Vijayan registered his admiration for the awe-inspiring images and symbols used by Kazantzakis, especially in The Last Temptation of Christ. The Greek writer's unparalleled mastery in making the confluence of myth, fantasy and reality cast a spell over Vijayan. There may be found instances of the influence of Kazantzakis in certain imageries used by the novelist.

### **FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY**

In several interviews Vijayan has admitted that Dostoyevsky is perhaps the only writer with whom he has a soul felt relationship. The deep and profound godliness and humanness of the Russian novelist and short story writer influenced him considerably especially in novels, Gurusagaram and Pravachakante Vazhi. Vijayan has often talked about Dostoyevsky's psychological penetration into the dark recess of the human heart.

Vijayan seems to have studied at depth Dostoyevsky's literary modernism, existentialism, psychological perceptions and theology. There could be seen much in common between spiritualistic and metaphysical leanings of Tolstoy and Vijayan's leanings towards the Upanishadic stream of Indian mysticism.

### **INDIAN POLITICAL SCENARIO OF THE 1970'S**

Vijayan's long career as a political cartoonist and columnist offered him a vantage point of view to the corridors of power. The scenario was highly distressing to a sensitive soul. Beneath the façade of democracy, Vijayan could see the ruthless display of the arrogance of power bordering on despotism.

The Emergency declared in 1975 could be described as the darkest period in the history of Indian democracy. Perhaps the most pathetic spectacle was the impotency of the public consciousness to rise against the vicious ruler who exerted her despotic decrees over the second largest democracy with perfect impunity.

The prophet in Vijayan could foresee the logical culmination of this dystopian state of affairs in the declaration of Emergency. Dharmapuram became the explicit treatment of a state caught in moroseness and lethargy. The primeval energies of Siddhardha, the prophet, have to be invoked to shake Dharmapuri out of its slumber.

### **ABIDING COMPASSION OF THE GURU**

The novels and short stories of Vijayan, which belong to the 1980's, register clear inclination to the path of mysticism, spirituality and the timeless Indian concept of the Guru. During this period he came under the influence of Sri Karunakara Guru of Pothencodu Ashram.

The aura of the mystic casts a spell in his works like Pravachakante Vazhi and Gurusagaram. In this shift in emphasis in the ideology of the novelist, may be

traced an ageless Indian tradition, according to which the Guru is an oceanic consciousness to which all individual streams must lead and merge.

This oceanic consciousness belongs to all vast unknown spaces and ages. In the Guru, one should seek the ultimate salvation and bliss. The recent works of Vijayan carry on this discourse with the ultimate truth and bliss of the Guru.

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### **NOTES**

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4. F.B.Pinion, A Hardy Companion (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1968.rev.edn, 1978) pp.162-4
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