CHAPTER-III

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It would not be wrong to say that there is the dominance of women characters in Thomas Hardy’s novels. He had deep sympathy for women due to their unimaginable sufferings in the patriarchal society. We can also see Hardy’s characters particularly the women characters struggling against society for their existence. However a close analysis of Hardy’s novels, made in the context of the times when he was writing, clearly reveals that what Hardy wrote was daring enough, against the existing situation of the Victorian period. It was the time when even a slight deviation from the Victorian norms of behaviour both for the gentlemen and the ladies was unacceptable to the public, and yet Hardy chose to portray his women characters with different angles. He described the predicament of the woman in the Victorian Age. He also showed some of his women of conventional type. But the most important thing of his portrayal of women characters is that he introduced a ‘New Woman’ in his fiction. He showed deep understanding of human nature but we can say that it is the
female psyche that he understood most. He had a very high estimate of woman which is qualified and conditioned by his keen observation of the realities of the contemporary life. He tried to present beautiful, interesting and fascinating woman allotting her great role in their respective life but he could not help it if life treated her cruelly.

Portrayal of women characters is the most significant facet in the work of Thomas Hardy. There are, however, different opinions among Hardy’s critics in respect of his presentation of women. Quite a few of Hardy’s critics have charged him to be a hater of women which seems quite baseless. The typical Victorian outlook insists on the stereotype of conformity in the contemporary women who were not expected to rebel against the established socio familial norms. Thomas Hardy’s ‘The Mayor of Casterbridge’ (1886) brings to light the harsh reality of the Victorian society regarding the treatment of women. This may be illustrated by comparing the conditions and attitudes towards women that obtain in the present day society with those of Hardy’s women characters, such as Susan Henchard, Lucetta
Templeman and Elizabeth Jane Newson. The effect of patriarchal feelings is also described in these novels.

"The Mayor of Casterbridge" begins with a scene that dramatizes the analysis of female subjugation as a function of capitalism, 'the auction of Michael Henchard's wife Susan at the fair at Weydon -Priors'. It seems that it was a common custom in early nineteenth century England where women like Susan were regarded as the slaves or commodities who could be disposed of at their owner's whims. After waking from his drunken sleep and realizing that Susan has indeed left with 'genial sailor', Henchard rationalizes that Susan's "meekness and ignorance ..... her ... idiotic simplicity" has led her to acquiesce in the transaction and does not look further than the spiked furmity for what drove him to sell her. His 'introspective inflexibility' makes it impossible for Henchard to see beyond his wife's gullibility. He quite conveniently forgets that it is his stubborn pride and not the alcoholic stupor that is responsible for the sale of Susan. He forgets that his own alcoholic abuse is the real cause of the sale. He thinks that it is a delusion - until he finds Susan's wedding ring on the grassy floor and the money in his breast pocket.
Eighteen years later, when the destitute Susan returns to Henchard, he tries to make amends, signaling his desire to be forgiven, by enclosing five pound notes and five shillings with the note that he writes to Susan.

Michael’s remarriage to Susan is the product of what Hardy terms, “business-like determination” and “strict rightness” of his thinking. Henchard courts Susan again and again as if it is his civic duty to do so. The visit was repeated again and again with business-like determination by the mayor. Even the common people’s reaction to their marriage is also negative. Almost all the residents of Casterbridge feel that Henchard, the Mayor is nothing but degrading himself. The town folk think that he is lowering his dignity by marrying a comparatively humble woman.

Elizabeth Jane, on the other hand is not subjected to any public ridicule or mistreatment as Lucetta. Henchard appears to be the main instigator of her worries. Henchard takes it upon himself to see that Elizabeth Jane conforms to the manners, fashion, attitude and general lifestyle expected of a Mayor’s daughter. He also assumes that Elizabeth will take his name as her father.
Had Elizabeth Jane been male, Henchard would not have been as domineering in his request since a man's name is considered 'sacred'. The next idiosyncratic impositions of Henchard upon Elizabeth Jane involve in her style of handwriting. Henchard's creed is that proper young girls write ladies 'hand'. He makes her feel ashamed at not having written a line of chain-shot and sand-bags rather than a proper Lady's hand. Henchard naturally assumes that since Elizabeth is female, her writing will reflect her relation to him which seems quite irrelevant. Henchard somehow expects that his marrying her mother would transform her into a well-bred lady. In this novel the present day society's conditions and attitudes can be compared to the treatment of Susan, Lucetta and Elizabeth Jane.

While studying about the tragic plight of Hardy's female characters we come to know that Susan is a victim of patriarchal hegemony. She is thrown in to the mould of an archetypal sufferer. Susan never lives a happy life, even Henchard does not give her anything except temper and the worst thing Susan has to suffer is that she is sold like an article in the market. In the auction Henchard says "Will any Jack or Tom Straw among you buy my goods?"
“Now then stand up Susan, and show yourself.” “The woman is no good to me who’ll have her?” (The M.of C., Ch. X, p.41) Even at the fair when Susan earnestly enquires about their lodging, Henchard turns deaf ear to her. Thomas Hardy explains his position at the fair when he talks with his wife, Susan, that, at the end of the first basin the man had risen to serenity; at the second he was jovial; at the third, argumentative, at the fourth, the qualities signified by the shape of his face. The occasional clench of his mouth and the fiery spark of his dark eyes begin to tell in his conduct; he is overbearing -even brilliantly quarrelsome.’ (Ibid, p. 39) Naturally their conversation takes a high turn as it often does on such occasions. Henchard talks about the ruin of good men by bad wives, and more particularly the frustration of many a promising youth’s high aims and hopes. The defunctness of his energies by an early imprudent marriage is the theme of their conversation. He says “I did for myself that way thoroughly said the trusser (Henchard), with a contemplative bitterness that was well-nigh resentful.” “I married at eighteen, like the fool that I was, and this is the consequence o’t.” (Ibid, Ch. I, p.40))

Her life with Newson is not even happy or smooth as his wife. Due to such unsettled life she is unlucky also about her health that’s why she suffers ill health and dies untimely. The sale
of woman i.e. Susan can be taken improbable by some readers but the readers who are well acquainted with the conditions which prevailed in England at the time to which this story pertains assure us that the sale of wife by a husband was not something beyond the possibility. "This wife sale was however traditionally sanctioned because a few years before Hardy wrote the novel that is in 1881 the last recorded wife sale had taken place in Sheffield." (Chakrabarti, p.125) Even this incident cannot be criticized on the ground of credibility. It is because a man in the tent at the fair in the furmity shop says that "For my part I don't see why men who have got wives and don't want 'em, shouldn't get rid of 'em as these gipsy fellows do their old horses, said the man in the tent. Why shouldn't they put 'em up and sell 'em by auction to men who are in need of such articles? Hey? Why, begad I'd sell mine if anybody would buy her!" (The M. of C.Ch. I, p.40) He points at himself and family with a wave of the hand intended to bring out penuriousness of the exhibition. Susan, who seems accustomed to such remarks acts as if she does not hear them and continues her spasmodic private words on tender trifles to the sleeping and waking child. Hardy threw light on the views of the people about women particularly about the sale of Susan. In this connection some people at the
auction are of the view that by accepting the decision of her husband of her sell, she has served well to her husband. On the other hand some opine that she will be better now because sailors are generally good natured men who have plenty of money. This shows the attitude of the patriarchal society which endorses her act of submitting herself to a sailor and appreciates the ‘sailors’. She is a conventional type of woman who easily accepts Newson as her new husband and thinks herself as his property. She lives with him as his wife without any regular marriage till the absurdity of her situation dawns on her mind. It shows that she is the victim of a patriarchal set-up in which the male voice is the law. Michael Henchard in selling his wife and daughter to the sailor Newson repeats in a startlingly blatant form the definitive patriarchal act of exchange. Even the later reunion between Henchard and Susan has the background of ambience based on wretchedness on the part of the weaker ‘other’. Not just Susan, but the women of the novel - all of them, from Susan and Lucetta to Elizabeth Jane are at once the instruments in the hands of the patriarchal power. The following passage clearly depicts the tragic plight of the women in the contemporary period,
“Five guineas”, said the auctioneer or she’ll be withdrawn. Do anybody give it? Yes, said a loud voice from the doorways. You say you do?’ asked the husband, staring at him.

“I say so” replied the sailor. (Ibid, Ch.I, p.43)

This passage throws light on the patriarchal Henchard who is the self-authorized preacher.

After this bargain, Newson, the new husband, turns to his bride and asks, ‘That you swear?’ ‘I do’ said she. (Ibid, Ch.I, p.41)

With these final and irrevocable words Susan Henchard Newson, like countless brides before her, seals her fate. Perhaps Hardy wants to suggest that the modern middle class marriages are nothing but sales disguised as Sacraments, it is because Susan’s alliance with the sailor is a marriage disguised as sale. Susan, Henchard’s wife is shown as idealized figure of the Victorian notion of ‘home-spun woman’ with unlimited patience. She is a modest and humiliate woman who suffers all through her life. During her married life with Henchard, she is never happy as she always gets disgrace and insults from him. After she is sold to Newson in the country fair she said ‘Mike, I have lived with thee a couple years and had nothing but temper!’ (Ibid, Ch. I, p.44) It is not only the sale of a woman but also a sale of a child (female)
which in the modern sense of the term can be called a free gift on purchasing of some big thing. Besides it can also be said that Henchard cares neither for his wife nor for his child. It may be because the child is female. Had the child been a male, perhaps the course of the novel would have been different because a male child, when he grows adult does not need any male protection as Susan and her daughter needed. Such kind of public sale of a wife indicates the perilous social position of woman which shows her inability to possess even her own body. In the case of Susan she is further burdened with a female child. Her maternal function or motherly responsibility is one of the fundamental conditions which make her dependent on men. After the sale Henchard tries to evade the full responsibility for his act by blaming it on an evening’s drunkenness, a temporary breakdown in reason and control, he even blames his lost wife’s ‘simplicity’ for allowing him to go through the act. He says; “Seize her, why didn’t she know better than bring me into this disgrace! ------ She wasn’t queer if I was ---- ‘Tis like Susan to show such idiotic simplicity. Meek -that meekness has done me more harm than the bitterest temper!” (The M. of C., Ch .II, p.49)
R.P. Draper writes, 'the return of Susan and Elizabeth Jane which precipitates the main phase of the novel is indeed a return of the repressed which forces Henchard gradually to confront the tragic inadequacy of his codes, the arid limits of patriarchal power. The fantasy that women hold men back, drag them down, drain their energy, divert their strength, is nowhere so, bleakly rebuked as in Hardy's tale of the man of character in this novel. Indeed in marrying Susan for the second time, Henchard forfeits something of his personal magic, and begins to lose power in the eyes of the town people, it is whispered that he has been captured and enervated by the genteel widow.

In health, Henchard determines the conditions of his relationships to women with minimal attention to their feelings. His remarriage to Susan is the product of strict mechanical rightness, his efforts to substantiate the union, to give it the appearance of some deeper emotion, is typical of his withholding of self:

To Susan his kindness is an official function, and although he promises her that he will earn his forgiveness by his future works, Henchard's behaviour to women continues to be manipulative and
proprietary. He deceives Elizabeth Jane in the uncomfortable masquerade of the second courtship; he has not sufficient respect for Susan to follow her instructions on her letter about her daughter's true parentage. When he wants Lucetta to marry him he threatens to blackmail her, when he wants to get rid of Elizabeth Jane he makes her a small allowance. He trades in women, with dictatorial letters to Farfrae, and lies to Newson, with an ego that is alive only to its own excited claims. (Draper R.P., p.146-151)

The act of bargaining does not cause much effect on Susan's mind as she is a typical Victorian woman obeying her husband sincerely or she accepts it as her lot or thinks that it is usual for women. It is entirely her succumb before the male dominated society where women solely depend on male for economic security. It is because the Victorian society does not provide women like Susan with sufficient scope for economic independence and stability. Being a woman she thinks herself quite unable to provide herself or to her daughter with any kind of security. After the so-called death of her husband Newson she is quite careful about the future of her daughter regarding her
paternal protection. Her decision to marry a second time to Michael Henchard is only to give social and economic security to her daughter as she is well aware of the society in which she is living. Till the end of her life she has to seek the paternal support which can give her daughter the bright future after her death. Unfortunately it is only she as a mother who cares for her daughter.

The position of Susan as a married woman is not more than a cipher. Henchard contemplates about the biological successor to his property whereas Susan is anxious about social parentage for her daughter. According to Henchard only biology can determine legality and paternity. Henchard is quite excited to prove that he is the biological father of Elizabeth Jane, that he is ready to do anything if she would look upon him as her father. So it is seen in the novel that the three women characters viz. Susan, Lucetta Templeman and Elizabeth Jane are mere subordinates to the governing patriarch - Henchard. Ironically we find that Henchard behaves like a 'subordinate deity' and serves greater powers of patriarchy. In a moving passage he asks:
“One word more, Elizabeth, he said, you’ll take my surname now—hey? Your mother was against it, but it will be much more pleasant to me. T’is legally yours, you know. But nobody need know that, you shall take it as if by choice. I’ll take to my lawyer—I don’t know the law of it exactly but will you do this—let me put a few lines in to the newspaper that such is to be your name?” (The M.of.C.p.152)

The above passage is an example of the definition of paternity and legality in a patriarchal system. Michael Henchard is unable to compromise with the situation on the other hand he becomes quite upset when he comes to know about real father of Elizabeth. A man like Michael Henchard having intense and passionate feelings cannot be moved by the relationship which is based merely on love. He believes only in the blood relations. Naturally such conventions prove Susan, deficient and weak as a mother and put her at the receiving end.

As Sneha Mishra writes ‘in comparison to Henchard’s public activities, Susan’s motherly duty seems invisible, informal and appears to be a non-activity in the patriarchal definition of work and power. However, the patriarchal division of labour into private and public denies Susan a participation in the public sphere and ultimately makes her a powerless mother in the
society. Susan’s journey from Henchard to Newson and again back to Henchard indicates the miserable plight of a mother who always has fears of the future of her daughter who is without father. This fear results in mental tensions, agony and suffering which she undergoes silently. However, though Henchard has been shown as a strong representative of the patriarchal society his final doom questions the patriarchal values. It is because Henchard experiences a heartrending suffering and reaches beyond the male exclusiveness and learns for himself a strange but new language of enlightenment and reason—that an attitude of tender care is of much more importance in human relationship than the biological lineage. Through his suffering one may guess that it is in Michael Henchard, at the end of the novel, one sees the dawn of the feminist values inaugurating a new human and social relationship. (Mishra Sneha, p.118)

While depicting the tragic plight of the women and bringing to the notice of the society the dark side of woman’s life Hardy has skillfully portrayed the character of Elizabeth Jane who equally suffers in the novel ‘The Mayor Of Casterbridge’ like Susan, her mother. Hardy has focused on her tragic life. Basically Elizabeth
receives no education but she is instinctively something of a philosopher. She looks upon life tragically rather than a comically. She does not believe in the happy moments of life as she thinks it transient. Elizabeth Jane is ill-educated and without any accomplishment. She is painfully aware of this deficiency in herself: "If they only knew what an unfinished girl I am", she said, "that I can't talk Italian or use globes or, show any of the accomplishments they learn at boarding-schools, how they would despise me!" (The M.of C., Chapter XV, p. 26) Elizabeth Jane is a thoroughly conventional girl. She follows the old, traditional patterns of thought and any departure from convention shocks her. Any suspicion of improper conduct is to her like a red rag to a bull.

Hardy's feminist stance can better be seen in the portrayal of the character of Bathsheba in "Far From the Madding Crowd". Bathsheba is a combination of her opposition to the marriage system and her inborn weakness for overpowering and exterior prodigality. As Santosh Chakrabarti says 'in her opposition to become some man's property in marriage she not only holds aloft the torch of protest against male hegemony, but also provides an early mould for shaping Sue in Jude the Obscure. A young woman
of the 1840s nourished on the tenets of the Old Testament, 'she is fully conscious of the sinfulness of the body'. So she not only protests vehemently against becoming some man's property in marriage but also, at Oak's suggestion that she should give herself to a man for reasons other than love, she displays a purity of conscience that she clearly does not own. (Chakrabarti, p. 125-126)

The way in which Bathsheba is introduced, admired and controlled by the male point of view is entirely relevant to her characterization in the largest sense. Her complex struggle with the various male "looks" she confronts is mirrored by her difficulties with the patriarchal society. Her story depicts the possibilities open to, and the limitations imposed upon, a spirited woman who tries to affirm her individuality in a society unready to accept unconventional behaviour, particularly on the part of a woman. Bathsheba is compared to pastoral beauty and a ballad heroine, but she is not a typical heroine. She is called 'Farmer Everdene' but again she is not a typical farmer of her age rather she excels the male farmer so far as the farming is concerned. Hardy while presenting her character not only showed her errors but also the disadvantages of being a woman. Bathsheba is
complicated figure; Hardy calls her ‘an impulsive nature under a deliberative aspect.’ She is not a coquette, though an act of coquetry initiates the tragic events of her experience. She is not fallacious; indeed. The impulsive or intuitive aspect of Bathsheba prevents her seeking marriage for its own sake, or marrying without love. But this aspect makes her vulnerable to the advances and attractions of Troy, who arouses her sexuality wrecking her usual understanding and her otherwise forceful will. From the very beginning, Bathsheba brings out her fluctuation about becoming like most women, a visual and sexual possession; she wishes to live by her own principles of life and to take charge of her life. Bathsheba possesses fluency, almost always a symbol of superiority in Hardy’s fiction, fluently teasing and criticizing Oak in their early encounters, and she is, a ‘novelty among women – one who finishes a thought before beginning the sentence which is to convey it.

“Bathsheba is not also free from a series of difficulties due to her gender and being alone. The first criticism is from the denizens of the Malthouse who serve as a rustic chorus. They call her “proud as a Lucifer” a “very vain feymell blackening her
reputation by calling her as a ‘tomboy’ and a ‘headstrong’ maid’.

(F. Fr. the Ma. Cr. p. 516) ‘Much of this is petty or jealous and Oak often attempts to defend her, but even he irrationally blames Bathsheba for ‘the threat posed to the year’s crops by the harvest supper debacle attributing it to “the instability of a woman.” Even when the rustics are not being overtly critical they subtly deprecate with their praise, as when they call her “a handsome body”. Despite her strength Bathsheba cannot escape the reductive situation of being a “sight” a physical object to the male eyes around her.” (Wittenberg, p.65-66) This has been stressed and brought into the notice of the reader by Thomas Hardy as a feminist. Though Bathsheba is more fortunate than many of Hardy’s heroines in having confidantes and being an integral member as a closely knit community, she often feels ‘friendless’ and “unprotected”, with “nobody in the world to fight her battles for her’. She, in spite of her desire for independence, feels some pressure to accept a worthwhile offer of marriage because ‘in every point of view ranging from political to passionate it was desirable that she, a lonely girl, should marry.’ About a decade before Hardy began work on Far From the Madding Crowd, an
article in the National Review had lamented the ‘redundancy’ of the single woman in England “who in place of completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own”. The writer called women of strength and intelligence “abnormal” and suggested that no woman should hold a responsible job because the cerebral organization of the female is far more delicate than that of man”. (Ibid, p. 67)

So far as Hardy’s portrayal of women as a feminist is concerned, it is closely linked with his growing sympathy for the women who are the victims of the patriarchal system of society. Hardy’s sympathy for the women victims is equal to his criticism of the male characters who are unable to change themselves in respect of the forced ideas and conceptions. The patriarchal views also lead them to misread or misinterpret women’s character and behaviour. This causes a great deal of suffering to the women in Hardy’s novel. Hardy’s presentation of women and their sufferings in this respect draws sympathy from the readers.

It seems that Bathsheba tries to be independent in her decisions. When Oak tries to prevail upon her to consent to marry
him, Bathsheba says that it is not possible for her to marry him. When Oak accuses her of running after him, she retorts back-

"I hate to be thought men’s property in that way though possibly I shall be had some day. Why, if I’d wanted you I shouldn’t have run after you like this, ‘t would have been the forwardest thing! But there was no harm in hurrying to correct a piece of false news that had been told you”. (F. Fr .the Ma. Cd, p. 507)

This statement reflects that Bathsheba is an independent person who can decide for herself regardless of being right or wrong. Her struggle is against the social conventions that generated laws, and shaped the obstructive divorce laws against which Hardy protected in ‘Jude the Obscure’. Bathsheba’s character as a ‘self reliant’, ‘deliberative’ and sexually aware woman is a challenge to the doll of English fiction which Hardy vowed to ‘demolish’. She says that she is too independent that she wants a husband who could tame her and expresses that Oak would never be able to tame her. She frankly admits that she is a woman without any money and is staying with her aunt for bare maintenance. Besides, she is better educated than he is. Bathsheba is influenced by the members of the patriarchal society. It is because, Boldwood with his burning eyes and coercive speeches, is a man of some
substance and community standing, so the pressure she receives from him is simultaneously sexual, linguistic and socio-economic. The same is about Sergeant Troy, because he is also in certain respects a symbol of the English patriarchy, because his father was a nobleman, his step-father a physician and he himself is a non-commissioned military officer. Bathsheba stands out in a novel where other characters even major ones- are typical. She shares the female burdens of passivity and inarticulacy with Fanny Robin, but whereas the stereotypical Fanny becomes the apotheosis of these qualities in death. Bathsheba remains alive and unpredictable, challenging the reader through her unorthodox actions and the very unconventional depth of her wordless responses.

The other woman character in the novel which is the victim of this society is Fanny Robin. Wittenberg writes, 'When the novel was first published, reviewers suggested that Hardy had drawn his material from 'Adam Bede', if so, he divided Hetty Sorrel in to two characters, both seduced and in some sense abandoned by the dashing soldier, eliminating the Dinah Moris figure. What is also interesting is that Fanny, a servant impregnated by the man she
hopes to marry faces a plight in which Hardy’s mother married, while Fanny becomes the archetypal fallen woman of Victorian melodrama and visual art, a wandering outcast pictured most often in the dark and snow, like Eppie’s mother in Silas Marner or the woman in painting such as Frederick Walker’s The Last Path panel of Augustus Egg’s Past and Present. (Wittenberg, p. 69)

Thomas Hardy revealed the misogynistic attitude of Troy towards women which resembles that of Boldwood’s. In the course of the novel Troy eulogizes and damns women on a large scale and he does finally become a lost man. Hardy criticized Troy’s undistinguished attitude towards women which seeks some changes. The reaction of Troy against the death of Fanny shows the masculine betrayal because Troy abandons her only for the sake of Bathsheba without caring for Fanny. Besides he is not loyal even to Bathsheba, he maltreats even to Bathsheba and she is also the victim of his ill-treatment as Fanny is. Bathsheba reminds Troy by saying that “This woman is your victim, and if not less than she”. Bathsheba’s private agony soars high when Troy kisses Fanny and boldly says that “This woman is more to me, dead as she is, than ever you were, or are or can be.” (Far.fr.Mad.Cd.p.672) Troy blames
Satan for tempting him with the beautiful face of Bathsheba and hampering him from marrying Fanny. It may be because Fanny has produced a child and Bathsheba cannot and Fanny is mother. It shows that only motherhood makes a woman perfect in the patriarchal society. When Bathsheba wants to know from Troy about her own marital status in the present situation, Troy retorts heartlessly....

"You are nothing to me - nothing ---- A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours". (Ibid, p.672) This utterance by Troy clearly shows the attitude of a husband towards his wife or an attitude of a man towards woman in the Victorian era. Bathsheba has been presented as a victim of patriarchal set up. Troy never treats Bathsheba lovingly as his wife. Bathsheba is unhappy after her marriage with Troy because he passes most of his time in drinking wine and lying drunk in the barn. On one occasion when Bathsheba and her husband Troy return from Casterbridge market to Weatherbury he tells Bathsheba that it is sheer ill luck that he has lost about a hundred pounds at the horse races, Bathsheba is much distressed by this. Being a wife when she tries to convince him that it is cruel on his part to waste her money
in this way, he brushes aside her remarks and says that he has never thought that she is such weak minded woman. Bathsheba appeals to him not to go to races again, but Sergeant Troy neglects her suggestion saying that this is impossible. It is his mannish ego which stops him to follow the suggestion of any woman or a wife. When it becomes unbearable to Bathsheba to be with Troy for any long time she is overcome by the thought of running away from him and behaves like an independent woman. She waits not a moment but turns to the door and runs out. But when brought back by her lady servant Liddy, she again behaves like an oppressed member of the patriarchal society and says that though she has left her house with no intention of going back, she has now changed her mind. She shows herself as a virtuous woman by saying - "No, I've altered my mind. It is only woman with no pride in them who run away from their husbands. There is one position worse than that of being found dead in your husband's house from his ill-usage and that is, to be found alive through having gone away to the house of somebody else. I've thought of it all this morning and I've chosen my course. A runaway wife is an encumbrance to everybody, burden to herself and a byword - all of which make up a heap of misery greater than any that comes by staying at home -
though this may include the trifling items of insult, beating and starvation. (Ibid, p.675)

“It is difficult for a woman to define her feeling in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs’, she protests. Muted by the unavailability of an effective language itself, Bathsheba is prey to the manipulations of her suitors and even to the self perplexity of one in situations for which ready definitions and available remedies are lacking. At the end of the book, the verbal comedy of Bathsheba’s awkward interview with Gabriel in his house which ends in her indirect proposal, allows understanding to emerge despite linguistic confusion or hesitation, but continues to emphasize the oppressive effect of social convention, which dictates what the woman cannot and the man must say in such a position. The novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* dramatically explores Bathsheba’s dilemma and through it, the position of women. The novel is a mirror of the world where the law and language are men’s. Fanny Robin keeps her needs a secret, and her pleadings are futile. Liddy Smallbury contradicts herself, trying to say not what she thinks or knows, but what her mistress wants to hear.” (Hardy, *Life and Works*, p.58-59)
Hardy's 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' is also full of his feminine sensibility. Tess, the heroine of the novel faces various experiences in her different stages of life. It can be said that Hardy's women are always convincing and real. They remain radically feminine in all of their responses. Not one of them is without life or vitality. Hardy's women are fascinating, having sensuous charm; in short their femininity is effectively evoked in his novels. The subtitle of the "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" 'A Pure Woman' received controversial comments from the readers and the critics. It is supposed to be the challenge for the orthodox moral code of the Victorian times. "The principal question of the novel's 'locus standi' relates to the purity of a fallen woman, for purity in women was synonymous with physical chastity. Hardy's objective in this novel is to interrogate the conventional idea of chastity and set a new code of sexual, and to certain extent, religious morality." (Chakrabarti p.131)

Through the presentation of Tess's character, Hardy criticizes the double moral standards and the concept of female sexual purity prevalent in the society. He throws light on the Tess's victimization by the patriarchal male who fails to recognize her as an individual. We can see Tess fighting against
her female stereotypical roles when she turns from virgin to unmarried mother and from deserted wife to a mistress. Though Tess becomes a fallen woman in Angel’s eyes after her revelation of seduction by Alec, her confession makes obvious Hardy’s sympathy for Tess and his criticism of the patriarchal ego of Angle because Angel too had the same kind of sexual past as Tess but is never found troubled in revealing his past to Tess simply because he is man and Tess finds it difficult because she is woman. Tess tries her level best to prove herself and expects to be forgiven (as she has also forgiven him). “Angel, Angel! I was a child - a child when it happened I knew nothing of man”. (T.D.Ch.XXXV, P.170) She means to say that she was a child then uninstructed and unaware of man-woman relationship, Angel, is not at all ready to accept her, on the contrary he says that “You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit I forgive you but forgiveness is not all.” (Ibid, p. 170) When Tess quotes some cases told by her mother worse than hers where the men did not mind at all about such cases, to this, Angel Clare replies “Don’t Tess, don’t argue, Different societies, different manners, Decrepit families imply decrepit wills, decrepit conduct. Heaven, why did you give me a handle for despising you more by informing me of your descent”
(Ibid, p. 170) She again pleads Angel by saying that “Forgive me as you are forgiven! I forgive you Angel, Angel recklessly replies “O Tess, forgiveness doesn’t apply to this case; you were one person, now you are another”. (Ibid, p.170) Here it can be said that chastity was the criterion set only for women and not for men in the Victorian England. The other thing is also exposed that the man who shows his candid nature only by his lofty words, fails to behave according to his frankness. In other words Angel is caught in conventionalism and modernism. The man, who loves Tess before marriage more than her, immediately ceases or eases off his love for her and is ready to give her financial help instead of the affection which any woman pines for. Angel, with all his emancipated ideas, is not merely a prig and a hypocrite but a snob as well. He understands nothing of the meaning of the decline of the D’Urbervilles and his attitude to Tess is one of self-righteous idealization. He says-----

“My position -is this -he said abruptly. I thought -any man would have thought that by giving up all ambitions to win a wife with social standing, with fortune, with knowledge of the world, I should secure rustic innocence, as surely as I should secure pink cheeks” (Ibid, p. 234) It is generally love which woman always expects from her husband but Tess is quite
unlucky in this matter she gets it neither from Alec nor from Angel. On the contrary she is abused from time to time by both the persons who are the members of the patriarchal society. Tess has been studied by many from two angles; she is called as 'Innocent' as well as 'Temptress'. Though Hardy talked about her innocence but he could not neglect her sexuality. It is because she is 'a fresh and virgin daughter of nature.' Her weakness lies in her overwhelming sexuality - a trait she has inherited from her mother. She is the victim of a conventional idea of morality. It is her nobility and strength of character that Hardy wanted to emphasize upon. Heredity, economic forces, time, chance and consequence shape her career and cause her downfall. Hardy put the blame at times or chance and at times on her ancestry and never spoke of her weakness. Her fault is her innocence and inexperience. Tess would have been happy had it been possible for human being to forget the past, at that time she would not have felt hurt so severely. Hardy called Tess as pure woman even though she surrenders Alec for the sexual act as she is tired and emotionally disturbed and confused. Tess feels guilty simply because she thinks that by having lived with Alec she has probably
violated the social and moral law. But she is not convinced of her guilt even though the strong reaction of the people around her makes her feel guilty. She even asks herself—

"Was once lost always lost really true of Chastity? Nature's recuperative power is for all its creatures. Why should it be desired to womanhood alone?" (Saxena, Dixit, p.169-70)

According to Geoffrey Harvey, 'Hardy's later novels are influenced by his growing preoccupation with contemporary social issues, such as the 'New Woman' debate, and although his discussion of the fallen woman question in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' was not in itself new or daring, his treatment of it was. Like the first readers, reviewers were divided about Hardy's presentation of Tess. Clementina Black, the novelist who reviewed 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' for the 'Illustrated London News' on Jan 9, 1892, is clearly in the pro-Tess lobby. She praises the novel's moral earnestness and offers a mildly proto-feminist defense of Tess as an example of the worthy and valuable woman, who is most at risk in contemporary society. She asserts Tess's claim for equality with men and evaluate her life on its own terms. For Black the novel's condemnation of tyrannical social convention
deliberately challenges the closed mind of the complacent reader.

*(Harvey Geoffrey, p.8)*

'The conventional reader wishes to be excited, but not to be disturbed, he likes to have new pictures presented to his imagination, but not to have new ideas presented to his mind. He detests unhappy endings, mainly because an unhappy ending nearly always involves an indirect appeal to the conscience and the conscience, when aroused, is always demanding a reorganization of that traditional pattern of right and wrong which is the essence of conventionality to regard as immutable. Yet more of course does he detest an open challenge of that traditional pattern, and Tess of the D’Urbervilles’ is precisely such a challenge.' *(Ibid, p. 115)*

Thomas Hardy bluntly attacked the Victorian culture which blamed the innocent girl like Tess. When he called this novel with the subtitle like *‘A Pure Woman’* he had his own ideas or perceptions about this. In the beginning of the preface of the novel he has clearly remarked that----

"This novel one wherein the great campaign of the heroine begins after an event in her experience which has usually been treated as fatal to her part of
protagonist, or at least as the virtual ending of her enterprises and hopes, it was quite contrary to avowed conventions that the public should welcome the book, and agree with me in holding that there was something more to be said in fiction than had been said about the shaded side of a well known catastrophe". (Preface, T.D., p.17)

It indicates that Hardy fought for the fallen woman. He advocated her position by saying that it is her innocence, chance and fate as well as the attitude of a man which compel her to be the victim of that situation. No girl is clever enough or conscious about the dangers of the society unless she is guided by any one of the elder members in the family. Even the girl, when faces a lot of transitions in her physique, she is unaware of the same and is guided either by her mother or the elder member of the family. When the girl like Tess, is sent outside must have been guided by her mother about the problems which she might face. When Tess's mother rebukes Tess for failing to obtain a marriage ring from Alec, Tess, instead, holds her mother responsible for what had happened to her. She says ----

"O mother, my mother! How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four moths ago, why didn't you tell me there was danger in men folk? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend
hand against because they read novels that tell them of these tricks, but I
never had the chance of learning in that way, and you didn’t help me” (T. D,
Cha. XII, p.73)

Hardy pointed out the vices and evils in the men folk from the
above quotation. He also pointed out the insecurity of women in
the male dominated world. Hardy’s such defense of women’s
rights and his sympathy for them clearly shows that he can be
called a feminist novelist, challenging the ethos of the Victorian
age. In his preface to the first edition of ‘Tess of the D’Urbervilles’,
Hardy stated ----

“In respect of the books opinion and sentiments, I would ask any too genteel
reader, who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks
and feels to remember a well known sentence of St. Jerome’s: If an offence
come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than the truth be
concealed.”

According to Geoffrey Harvey we see in Tess only a
beautiful earth-born creature struggling against a fate too strong
for her, a fate that brings her to a dishonoured grave and yet not a
fate that will cut her off from the peace and joy of another world
than this. She is elemental, this peasant’s daughter with the blood
of Norman noble in her veins. She has the elemental freshness, the
odours of earth, that Mr. Hardy’s other peasants have, but she has also an elemental strength and nobility that they have not. This elemental freshness, this elemental strength and nobility make her a woman fit to set in the gallery of Shakespearean women—which is but to say that she is a creation of genius that time cannot devour. (Harvey, p.24)

Though the novel’s subtitle ‘A Pure Woman’ created a great uproar, Hardy was not affected by it as he was trying to give justice to the woman who was raped at an early age by licentious person at the same time he was giving a moral courage to the women who were like Tess. Her decision of leaving her seducer is completely related with her behaviour and her future course of action. Hardy’s artistic, moral and emotional identification with Tess gives her a personality that leaves an everlasting impression in the mind of the reader. She is both ‘ideal’ and ‘real’. Tess is sentenced by the contemporary society which follows an ill adapted and rigid convention for her ‘illicit’ union with Alec and the subsequent birth of an “illegitimate” child. Here the conventional society seems to be barbarous as it did not understand the situation in which Tess was born and brought up
as well as how time and fate shaped her character. But Hardy regarded Tess as sexually pure, because ‘unchastity’ cannot be treated as something unnatural. He considered her morally pure even when she kills Alec, for had there been any other woman instead of, Tess she would have done the same as Tess did. She commits the murder under the force of the abnormal situation which is imposed upon her by the conventionality of her husband, Angel, and the impetuosity of her seducer, Alec. Till the end she remains unconvinced of her guilt. That is why she is ‘a pure woman’ according to Hardy’s conception of morality.

As Duffin writes, the word ‘pure’ had an aesthetic usage. There is highly interesting suggestion. We speak of a pure curve, pure art, and pure comedy, let us adopt the suggestion and apply the word ‘pure’ in this sense to Tess, unbroken, unspoilt, unadulterated, unflawed, and perfect! Hardy has also used the word ‘standard’ regarding Tess: an almost standard woman, Hardy calls Tess. Duffin describes this word as standard means model of a quality to be aimed at by comparison with which inferior examples are tested and rejected. \textit{(Duffin, p.218)}
In his both novels like 'Far From the Madding Crowd' and 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles', Hardy tried to stress on the real definition of the marriage. He wished to show that marriage is not only the combination of two bodies but it is a marriage of two minds. In short there should be proper understanding between two of them; and they should esteem each other. But we can see that most of the heroines portrayed by Hardy, though they possess better qualities, better than the male characters have to be secondary due to their sex or due to the social norms of the Victorian age. In short he showed his heroines; victims of the eternal urge towards marriage which society and culture breed in people.

In many cases marriage takes away from women their economic power, their sexual power, and their power to work, their identity, and so many things. ‘Don’t get married!’ many feminist say, Hardy didn’t say exactly like this but he focused on the woman’s plight after marriage in a patriarchal society. Hardy’s viewpoint was that marriage ruins love whereas the feminists state that marriage ruins a lot more than love. It ruins money, economy labour sexuality and mainly identity. Thomas Hardy showed how
difficult it was for a woman to have economic independence. By portraying the character of Tess, he explored a woman on her own, a woman discarded by men and patriarchy, yet ultimately, remaining dependent on men and patriarchy. Tess works, she really works hard, but still she does not get success. Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a rigorous materialist analysis of the economic situation of women in the late 19th century. Tess of D'Urbervilles bears us well to an in-depth feminist and Marxist, materialist analysis, for it exposes many of the hypocrisies of patriarchal culture. The problem is that women are seen by men as possessions, things to 'have', to 'take'. This happens in Thomas Hardy's 'Tess' as Tess is 'traded' between Angel and Alec and is possessed by both. Alec 'possesses' Tess physically, sexually and Angel possesses her sexually too though by not sleeping with her. His possession works by a negation of eroticism which, in the Christian way still upholds the sexual status quo of patriarchal power gaming. Angel emphasizes her virginity, which reinforces her sexual status quo, which men dictate, and Alec emphasizes her eroticism, which also reinforces the status quo. Tess is seen as both virgin and whore by her men. The women like Bathsheba, Susan,
and Tess are defined by their men. Only a few women in Hardy’s fiction have their own identities largely free from men’s definitions (though defined by patriarchy in general): Eustacia, Sue Bridehead and Elizabeth Jane.

Even in the scene of the little child, the bastard gift of shameless Nature, i.e. Tess’s daughter, Tess has to suffer greatly. As she (Tess’ daughter) is a fatherless child, she is not baptized properly with the Christian rituals and Tess again with the fear of the code of Christianity baptizes the child with the witness of her younger brothers and sisters and says to the child “sorrow I baptize thee in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost” (T.D. Ch.I, p. 81) and unfortunately the girl passes away before dawn. Hardy did not approve of the rigidity of code which denies sympathy and solace to a person placed in Tess’s position. The incident naturally arouses in us a deep feeling of protest against institutional religion which, on doctrinal ground, declines to offer the comfort that is so badly needed and sought. Humiliations, torture and injustice were as if the integral part of woman’s personality, particularly in the Victorian society, for after the seduction by Alec and the death of her child, Tess, bearing all her
misfortune becomes ready to rebuild her life. No doubt neither circumstances nor the society allow her to live happily even after the cruel experiences of her life but she dares to live again with the same enthusiasm. Hardy gave the reason of her energy-

"Let the truth be told, women do as a rule live through such humiliations and regain their spirits and again look about them with an interested eye. While there is life there is hope is a conviction not so entirely unknown to the 'betrayal 'as some amiable theorists would have us believe". (T.D.Ch. XV, p. 87) In other words Hardy wanted to show that it is not difficult for a woman to overcome her sorrow and grief after the unfortunate experience of having been seduced and deserted by a man. (As she has to) Not only the society but also the members of the family disbelieve in a lady who is thrown by reckless men like Alec and Angel. After Tess's second returning to home deserted by Angel, on the ground of her chastity, Tess's mother curses her lot, by saying

"O you little fool - you little fool! burst out Mrs. Durbeyfield splashing Tess and herself in her agitation. 'My Good God! That ever I should ha' lived to say it, but I say it again, you little fool!" (Ibid, p.186) Even her father does not entrust her. On the other hand her father's statement offends her most when he asks his wife-
“D’ye think he really have married her ?-or is it like the first-” (Ibid,p.188)

He means to say if Angel has really married Tess or she had suffered the same fate at his hands which she had suffered at Alec’s. Tess is grieved when she overhears this question of her father. It is because she thinks that if her father doubts her; will not the neighbours and other acquaintances doubt her? And helplessly she feels that she cannot live long at home. Unfortunately she enters again into this unprotected world, where women are treated as wild animals. Hardy’s subtitle as ‘a pure woman’ is justified by the same man who has seduced her because he says that “You withdrew yourself from me so quickly and resolutely when you saw the situation; you did not remain at my pleasure, so there was one Petticoat in the world for whom I had no contempt, and you are she.” (Ibid, Ch.XLVI,p.230) No doubt Alec’s transformation has, after all, proved to be a superficial and temporary affair. But his confession is enough to prove Tess’s purity but at the same time it arouses a feeling of sympathy in our mind because we know that Alec is again trying to deceive the poor, wretched girl and naturally we feel sorry at her defenselessness against this rogue.

Finally it is obvious that it is not only the tale of Tess Durbeyfield, but there are lots of Tesses in the society. It is a story
of a pure soul struggling against the vices of the social institution which is based on false and pretentious morals. It is also a struggle against the demand of society for double moral standard as well the demand of purity only from women, where men are exempted. While studying the phase of Hardy’s female characters it can be seen that Hardy had an extraordinary knowledge of female heart, its girlish coquetries and mannerism, motives and feelings. His women also show a marked variety in the novels like 'The Return of the Native' and 'Jude the Obscure'. His later heroines are found struggling against established standards due to their independence of thought. They are called rebels and their rebel is against the lined, confined and enwrapped existence of marriage. They are seen fighting against the social values. Even the sexual passions in Hardy’s women are not a negative but a positive attribute. Women in their unconventionality of behaviour oppose the restrictions laid on their sexuality in observance with the double moral standards practiced by the patriarchal society.

Eustacia Vye in the 'The Return of the Native' is also a rebel. She rebels against the limited resource of life that her husband can give her that is, staying on the heath. “The character
of Eustacia Vye, the heroine of 'The Return of the Native' shocked
the public so much so that a woman reader scrawled in a library
copy of the novel the words 'Oh, how I hate Thomas Hardy'. The
openness about Eustacia's frustrated sexuality and her desire for
freedom was like disturbing the role expectations of an ideal
woman.” (Kaur, p. 89) The rebelliousness in Eustacia is suggested
through the imagery of fire at many places in the novel.

"Assuming that the souls of men and women visible essences, you could fancy
the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame -like. The sparks from it that rose in
to her dark pupil gave the same impression."(The Ret. Of the Nat.p.63)

"Eustacia's sexuality is perceived as a powerful animating
force in the novel. The presentation of Eustacia's unconventional
sexuality rejects the Victorian notion of immorality on the part of
woman. Hardy's portrayal of Eustacia, instead, problematises
stereotypical criticism of Victorian womanhood. Besides, Thomas
Hardy decried about Eustacia as a woman of grand passions. He
comments that "she had the passions and instincts which make a model
goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman" whereby, the
satire is leveled at society's conventional picture of a desirable woman and
not at Eustacia." (Mathur, p. 84)
According to Arti Mathur, "Eustacia’s indulgent and carpe-dium existence, thus, is an expression of her rebellion against conventional gender expectations. Eustacia’s conception is perhaps the most radical force in the novel which explains the problem of lack of space of a confrontational woman in society. Eustacia’s rebellion itself is partial, for she never does succeed in ‘attaining’ herself. For the success of her rebellion implies a kind of upheaval that would uproot the patriarchal structures of society - a chaos hinted as “confusion” in the first image of Eustacia on the Rain barrow.” (Mathur, p. 88)

Eustacia’s rebel is against the suffocated life which women have to live on the heath where she is married. She hates the life on the heath. She desires for the life which has glory and glamour. Basically she is from Budmouth; a fashionable seaside resort. She has her contacts with highbrow class. Once again it is the misfortune of Hardy’s heroine that due to her parents’ death and the need of male support Eustacia has to turn towards Egdon Heath. But there is no wrong in her attitude if she wishes to go to Paris as she is grown up. It is her presence of mind that makes her to think that her desire to leave Heath will be fulfilled only after
marriage; for it is the moral of our society that woman has to seek male support in different stages of life. As she is young it is obvious that any young man will marry her and support her. Eustacia no doubt compromises this and concentrates not only on the groom but the eligible groom who will fulfill her desire, that is why when she falls in love with Daman Wildeve, the wealthy owner of Quiet woman Inn, she deserts him soon because she does not find any spark in him regarding her own desire. Soon when she learns about Clym Yeobright and his prosperous situation in Paris, she falls in love with him without meeting him and wishes to marry him. What makes Eustacia to think to lead such life is her isolated, gloomy, lonely and empty life. Hardy advocated Eustacia's compromise being the emancipator of women. Eustacia's pleading rightly proves that she has been on the Heath only because of her helplessness and so nothing is wrong if she yearns for the life in cities. She says -

"O deliver my heart from this fearful gloom and loneliness: send me great love from somewhere, else I shall die." (The Ret. of the Nat. p.67)

"Eustacia is a rebellion in true sense of the word as Hardy writes about her that her high Gods were William the conqueror,
Strafford, and Napoleon Bonaparte. Had she been a mother she
would have christened her boys such names as Saul or Sisera. At
school she sides with Philistines in several battles, and wonders if
Pontius Pilate were as handsome as he was frank and fair. She was
a girl of some forwardness of mind. Her instincts towards social
nonconformity are at the root of this. In the matter of holidays her
mood is that of horses who, when turned out to grass, enjoy
looking upon their kind at work on the highway. She only values
rest to herself when it comes in the midst of other people’s labour.
She does not value holidays or pleasure or rest. She hates Sundays
when all is at rest and she often says that Sunday would be the
death for her. On the contrary on Sundays she occupies herself
with some domestic duties. On Saturday nights she frequently
sings a psalm. It is always on a week day that she reads Bible. But
behind this promiscuity linger her sense of frustration, isolation
and betrayal. To see the heathmen in their Sunday condition that
is, with their boots newly oiled, and not laced up (a particularly
Sunday sign), walking leisurely among the turves and furze
faggots they had cut during the week, and kicking them critically
as if their use were unknown, is a fearful heaviness to her. Her
unconventional views of life are to some extent the natural begetting of her situation upon her nature. To dwell on a heath without studying its meanings is to Eustacia like wedding a foreigner without learning his tongue. The subtle beauties of the heath are lost to Eustacia she only catches its vapours. An environment which would have made a contended woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist even a giddy woman thoughtful makes a rebellious woman saturnine."

(Ibid, p.67-68)

As she is rebellion and independent in thinking she takes her own decision. No doubt she is not successful in her decision because it is again her secondary position that prevents her from fulfilling her desire. Here also fate and chance play an important role in this novel of Hardy like his other novels because the man who had been living in Paris, hates Paris, and loves Heath after marriage whereas Eustacia's thinking him a right man for her stay in Paris frustrates her more which definitely leads her towards her doom. She pleads before her husband to take her to Paris, by saying -
“Take me to Paris, and go on with your old occupation, Clym, I don’t mind how humbly we live there at first, if it can only be Paris, and not Egdon Heath.” (Ibid, Ch.I, Bk. IV, p. No.24.)

Eustacia is gloomy and lonely because she is conscious of her beauty and her extraordinariness. Moreover she wants to be different from the ordinary. She cannot mix with the common lot and behave and feel as they do. Because of her hankering for uniqueness, she cannot be satisfied with the common things that life offers. So she tries to achieve things for herself with the help of her ‘power’ but she can only influence Wildeve and Clym a little she cannot change her fate.

It is generally found that there is a controversy between the choices, of a husband and a wife but it doesn’t mean that the wife is always wrong. Eustacia yearns for the materialistic life, she thinks about the self-development which according to her is possible only in the city. Hardy pointed out that for the married woman like Eustacia; dream remains always dream if she is not supported by her husband. Being a person Eustacia has also her own choices about life; she does not insist Clym to come to Paris without any intention. She knows that Clym lived there that is
why she transfers her love from Wildeve to Clym. Hardy’s Eustacia Vye is a woman with some advanced nature. She possesses an unconventional and rebellious nature; she has strong dislike about the pastoral life i.e. heath, where she has been living, so she likes to pass her time within the four walls killing her time by singing and playing music and reading Bible instead of going outside on the heath.

Eustacia is an ambitious, courageous, intelligent and able woman but it is the haplessness of most of the women that at umpteen times such type of courageous and ambitious women have to suffer in the society and are always discouraged regarding their bravery and ambition. When Tess restarts her life with courage and ambition, after the seduction by Alec, the course of life is not easy for her. She suffers and suffers till the end of her life. It is she who punishes Alec and not the society, the society on the contrary blames Tess. But it is not a poetic justice; it is a partial justice, like that in Shakespearean tragedies. Concisely, Hardy showed his heroines bold, courageous and ambitious, leading to their doom owing to the laws of the social institutions and
patriarchy. At one place Wildeve appreciates Eustacia by saying that ----

"Eustacia is 'such a rare plant in such rare place!'" (Ibid, Bk, VI, Ch. VI, p.345)

Hardy advocated Eustacia’s strategy for the life which she yearns, because it shows her revolt against the conventional way of life, despite she is defeated in it. Misfortunes never allow Eustacia to live her life with glee as Clym becomes blind and works merely as furze cutter living in a small cottage. Finally Eustacia realizing her mistake turns to Wildeve which is also a foolish act and so her action also brings a lot of grief to her which takes her to her untimely death. But her transformation has only one reason that is the romantic ideas of life. Her sexual promiscuity is revealed in the expository remark of Hardy ------

"To be loved to madness ----such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstractions called passionate love more than for any particular lover" (Ibid, Ch. VII, p. 66)

She does not care much for fidelity in love she cares much for intensity than fidelity. After studying Hardy’s portrayal of Eustacia’s character one may be at doubt that either Hardy wanted
to portray her as a woman romantically extrovert who cannot be reformed and whose ambition is to enjoy the life or is she a woman, who herself confesses in (cha. six Bk. four,) that, is she a wronged woman denied the rights that are due? It is to be decided by the readers because Hardy strongly supported her and her activities as a rebellious woman.

While fulfilling the ideas of her life, her courses go wrong but her ambition is right. Thomas Hardy tried to attack the social norms and family systems of the Victorian age by portraying the two opposite characters of Eustacia and Thomasin. He pointed out that the submissive and patient woman like Thomasin though helpless or dependent, may live happy life but the woman like Eustacia who wants to be independent and unconventional, suffer greatly and meets her downfall. Actually Wildeve is older than the girl, Thomasin by several years, but she has no objection against it on the other hand she likes he much. In the opinion of one of the members of the crowd a pretty girl like Thomasin was a fool to desire to marry a man like Wildeve. But again we see the dominance of the patriarchal society that the other people opine that, a hundred maidens would agree to marry that man because
he is rich. Hardy here accentuated the problem of marriage. In such society Thomasin is supposed to be a model woman because she exhibits her submissiveness and not imperiousness. But Eustacia never withdraws from her destination; she changes the track but does not comply with the system. She is persistent in her goal so she says to Wildeve—“Tis my cross, my misery and will be my death.” (Ibid, Bk. I, Ch. IX, p.82) Hardy showed through the character of Eustacia Vye that woman's dependence on men may lead her towards her destruction in such society.

According to Hardy Eustacia is the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess. (Ibid, Ch. VII, p. 63) She says——

“How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman and how destiny has been against me! I do not deserve my lot! She cries in a frenzy of bitter revolt. "O the cruelty of putting me in to this ill conceives world! I was capable of much but I have been injured and blasted and crushed by things beyond my control!” “O how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!” (Ibid, Ch. VII, Bk. V, p.359)

Eustacia has a dignity which is rather unusual in women of her class. Perhaps this dignity was the gift of heaven. This “Queen
of Night" as Hardy called her, seldom schemes but when she does scheme, her plans show rather the comprehensive strategy of a general than the small arts called womanish, though she cannot utter oracles of Delphian ambiguity when she does not wish to speak in a straightforward manner. In heaven she would perhaps be given a seat between the Heloise and the Cleopatra. (Ibid, p.68)

She never wishes to lose her independence for the sake of shifting of more congenial environment. Though she longs to live in a city, she would not like to go to Budmouth if she has to satisfy the whims of a woman who would hire her services.

While leading an isolated life on Egdon Heath, Eustacia begins to feel interested in Wildeve not because she really falls in love with him but to fulfill her desire for her existence. She bluntly tells Wildeve: "Damon, you are not worthy of me I see it, and yet I love you." (Ibid, p.60) She loves him because there is no other man on Edgon Heath worth her attention. As soon as she comes to know about other man she transfers her love to him. She also warns Clym that she is not the kind of woman who can become a 'home spun' wife. (Ibid, Ch. IV, Bk. III, p.199) Commenting on her marriage with Clym she says to Wildeve: "Many women would go far
for such a husband. But do I desire unreasonably much in wanting what is called life music, poetry, passion, war and all the beating and pulsing that is going on in the great arteries of the world. That was the shape of my youthful dream, but I did not get it. Yet I thought I saw the way to it in my Clym.” 

(Ibid, Bk. IV, Ch. VI, p.285)

Eustacia is so rebellious and powerful that she is taken for a witch by the superstitious or rather by the submissive women of the Victorian society. Her rebellious nature or revolt is taken as abnormal and so she is secluded. Like the modern writers, Hardy also believed that marriage is the beginning of a new life. Marriage, according to him is not the ultimate aim of life but it is one of the goals of life and it is the lighthouse which shows the right path to the life if it is based on sensibility or compromise. Hardy thinks that marriage does carry with it a hope of happiness. In his novels he also showed that marriage may lead to plenty of unhappiness for both husband and wife if it does not fulfill all the needs of life. Hardy left his characters happily married when he is certain that both husband and wife have so much of loving kindness for each other that they can tide over any difficulty that comes in their path. But when he felt that something must be done for the poor unfortunates who are caught up in its toils without
any hope of deliverance, he took up the problem of marriage exhaustively. For instance in 'Far From the Madding Crowd', 'The Return of the Native' and 'Jude the Obscure', he analysed the problem of 'matrimonial divergence'.

Hardy had a very high opinion about his heroines. He called Eustacia a 'Goddess' in her power and capriciousness, a Titaness in her rebelliousness, a witch in her solitude and mystery, and a Cleopatra in her pride, her passion and her scorn of consequence. We may rightly call her a new woman because Eustacia does not care about people's opinion regarding her. The reddleman's hint that Eustacia might get a bad name by her association with Wildeve has no permanent terror for her. As far as social ethics are concerned, Eustacia approaches the savage state. On being asked by Clym about her help to start a school she explains that she is not keen about teaching people because she does not have much love for her fellow creatures. In fact she says she hates people. On the other hand she reminds him of her destination by saying that she hates the heath which she regards as a cruel taskmaster, and that she feels more interested in the life of a city like Paris. She says to him "To be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven to me; but I
would rather live with you in hermitage here than not to be yours at all.” (Ibid. Ch. IV, Bk. III, p.200) Eustacia is much aware of her dignity as she thinks herself very beautiful she thinks her beauty as a part of dignity when Clym, after weakening his eyesight decides to become a furze cutter, it hurts her much because she thinks that his decision would considerably lower her social status. She even shades bitter tears but in vain. She also expresses her strong disapproval of his decision by saying him that -----“I would starve rather than do it! And you can sing! I will go and live with my grandfather again!” (Ibid, Bk. IV, Ch. II, p.255)When Clym asks her if it is her wrong decision to marry him, she asserts his opinion. Eustacia’s such romantic illusion ends her still she does not recede from her goal.

Thomas Hardy’s ‘Jude the Obscure’ made a great tumult among the people. Even his wife advised him to stop the publication of this novel. It is his last novel but the review about the novel made Hardy quite upset. Most of the reviewers called this novel as ‘Jude the Obscene’, Hardy the Degenerate’ and ‘The Anti-Marriage League. The novel was banned from public libraries. A bishop threw it into the fire. Initially it made Hardy
almost ill to find himself at the centre of the greatest literary scandal for years. But he himself did not think that it was an immoral piece of work because his aim was only to write honestly.

The superficial study of the novel compels some readers to take this novel only about love and sex but it explicates the system of marriage as an institution it is an attack on Victorian chains of social convention.

By the time he wrote his novel he was familiar with the 'New Woman' fiction and the 'The New Woman' concept. He prepared his own theory of marriage and attacked on the orthodox institutionalized marriage system. Hardy did not think marriage, only as the conjugation of two bodies and two different families rather he thought marriage as the union of two person's tastes, emotions, ideas and choices. In married life, importance is given only to the harmony between husband and wife. Marriage in the absence of the above things is not marriage at all according to Hardy. The marriage which is based on the material prosperity and the authority of the traditions just, to keep up and consecrate is the debase form of agony and the worst kind of ruthlessness in the world. Reciprocal love and respect in the minds of the married
couple always lead them towards the pathway of happiness. Besides Hardy suggested that if a marriage which is devoid of the above qualities should not continue only in the name of holiness and conventionality. In the Preface to the first edition of this novel Hardy explains that "My opinion as that time, if I remember rightly was what it is now that a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties -being then essentially and morally no marriage." (J.the Ob., Preface to the first edition) This preface to "Jude the Obscure" shows that the marriage is the only important theme in the novel. In this novel Hardy tried his level best to present the ideas about marriage before the people in the Victorian era. He wrote to Sir George Dongles "I feel that a bad marriage is one of the direst things but beyond that my opinions on the subject are vague enough." (Tyagi, p.130)

Sue Bridehead is portrayed as the 'New Woman'. As Phillip Mallet writes, "Many Victorian feminists, including many 'New women' of the 1890s, implicitly valorized the male world by framing their demands for access to education and the professions in terms of the privileges already offered to men. Sue is more ambivalent. For her Christminster is 'full of fetishist and ghost
seers.' With good reason she opposes as well as stands for 'culture' like the voices which greet Jude on his entrance to the city, the books she has read represent a male tradition which has no room for her. Nor is this a merely theoretical exclusion. Her father refuses to have her in his house after she shares a flat with the Christminster graduate, and while 'experience and unbiased nature' tell Jude to sympathise with her unhappiness as a wife and 'instinct' persuades Phillotson, to allow her, her freedom, both know that, as 'order loving' men pledged to uphold the 'dogmas' and 'principles' of church and state they ought to condemn her. As Arabella reminds Phillotson men have the laws on their side. ‘Moses knew” (Mallet, p.192)

“In a Postscript added in 1912 Hardy offered Sue as type of the woman of the feminist movement - the flight, pale "bachelor" girl, the intellectual, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, and she herself occasionally argues that other women think and feel as she does, as when she insists to Jude that her reluctance to marry is 'not so exceptional ..........as you think.' But the context here is her need to defend herself against the charge of abnormality, and more often she insists on
her differentness. Unlike Jude, who joins an Artizans' Mutual Improvement Society, she makes no friend of her own sex even among the students who support her at the training college. This separateness may reflect Hardy's wish to rebut any suggestion that her nature is 'perverted' or 'depraved' as he explains to Edmund Goss, whose review in 'Cosmopolis' described Sue as 'degenerate'. Her 'abnormalism' consists in 'disproportion'. (Ibid, p. 192) Sue is called 'New Woman' because she is quite different from Hardy's other heroines. Her concept of marriage is also different from these women because she has an explicit awareness of herself as member of an oppressed sex rightly seeking autonomy. Sue's final returning to the System of marriage may call her an orthodox or stereotype heroine, but her marriage with Phillotson and her experience with him and her reaction to this are adequate to prove her as a new woman. She expresses her view about marriage by saying that

"What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes. (The Ob., Ch.1, Part IV, p. 211) Sue clearly attacks on the relation of the husband and wife, she thinks that the institution of marriage brings limitation on the life of the husband
and wife, but again it is patriarchal society that allows a man to have his dominance over his woman. She has to behave according to the whims of her husband and the male members of the family. In this connection Sue remarks that——-

"He (husband) can spend until midnight balancing the school registers, and then muttering on about school committees and draughty ventilators he can ascend to the nuptial chambers quite as if sexual intercourse with his wife were just part of the day’s functions." (Ibid p. 217) She even comments on the people’s attitude about marriage, she thinks that the views of the people about the relations of man and woman are limited, as is proved by their expelling her from the school. Their philosophy only recognizes relations based on animal desire. Hardy spoke through her when she rightly points out that, ‘the social moulds, civilization fits us into, and have no more relations to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star patterns. I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone with, aberrant passions, and uncountable antipathies. (Ibid Part IV, Ch. II, p.204)
Kamala Das, an Indian poet has pointed out the drawback of this patriarchal system. While lashing out this marriage system she writes---

"You called me wife

I was taught to break saccharine in to your tea, and

To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering

Beneath your monstrous ego. I Became a dwarf"

(The Old Playhouse, 1973)

According to Kamala Das the woman is expected to play only the conventional roles, and her own wishes and aspirations are almost neglected. This conventional role of wife dwarfs as well as stints woman's personality. Hardy also sniped on this marriage system in 'Jude the Obscure'. He delineated it with the help of the characters like Sue and Phillotson, Sue and Jude, Jude and Arabella. The marriage of Jude and Arabella is soon broken because they do not have their spiritual relations quite strong to continue their marital life happy and successful. He soon becomes careless about her beauty which he is much eager to enjoy before their marriage. But Arabella is also a woman who is very independent by nature and so can't be cowed down by her husband. So she leaves him. There is a tragic end to the marital
relations of Jude and Arabella because their married life is merely based on only physical, sexual feelings having not any harmony in their natures. Even Arabella also comments on the system of marriage when she says -"how hopelessly vulgar an institution legal marriage is?" (J.O.p.267)

The main character of this novel is Sue Bridehead, a mouthpiece of Thomas Hardy, to attack on this system. Sue is a woman who has her own picks, her determination and principles of life but finally she surrenders to the social and the religious restrictions. According to Thomas Hardy due to an unhappy marriage both man and woman have to bear the misery associated with an unsuitable marriage all their life and all their ambitions of doing something in their life come to nothing.

The system of marriage always demands that man will choose the woman and there is hardly any chance of such right to woman to choose her husband. In this connection Sue remarks that "My bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure, but I don't choose him, somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal" (Ibid, p. 170) Hardy demanded that as it is the choice of a man, it should also be the choice of woman to select her
life partner. In short this system has certain kind of limitations and is totally inclined to the men. From the above quotations of Sue, it is visible that she craves for the suitable husband and she does it. Sue Bridehead is totally against physical union. She is so filled with the fright of sex that she stays away from her husband, Phillotson. She cannot endure any physical contact with him, not even his single kiss. One night as her husband casually enters her room she jumps out of the window, risking injury in order to avoid his contact. She elopes with Jude, but only on this condition that she will live with him simply as a friend and not as a wife. She tells him frankly "My liking for you is not as some women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely delicate kind, and I don't want to go further and risk it by - an attempt to intensify it!" (Ibid, p. 238)

She is quite different from the conventional women seeking for their identity. She tries to demand the thing which has never been demanded by any woman which in the modern age has become a popular trend among the city dwellers that is 'live-in' relationship. She demands to live with her lover, Jude without marrying him. On being refused initially by Richard Phillotson to free her she explains to him that "she was a coward - as so many women are - and her
theoretic unconventionality broke down. If that had not entered in to the case it would have been better to have hurt his feelings once for all then, than to marry him and hurt them all her life after” (Ibid, p. 220) Hardy also focused on the system of the church when Arabella remarks to Jude that ‘Then shall the man be guiltless, but the women shall bear her iniquity’. Men rough on us women, but we must gun and put up wi’it!” (Ibid, p.314) Her thinking is related with the incident when Phillotson allows Sue to live with Jude; here he has to face a strong disapproval of the authorities. On the one hand it is Phillotson’s wise decision that, if his wife is not willing to live with him and is interested in other, it is right on his part to allow her to go to the other without waiting for the dissolution of their marriage. But society and social laws do not permit this, it shows that man should not force his wife for anything and should understand the state of her mind. Phillotson himself expresses the hollowness of the marriage when he explains to Gillingham “that merely taking a woman to church and putting a ring upon her finger could by any possibly involve one in such daily continual tragedy as that now should by her and me!”(Ibid, p.229) Sue is intensely conscious of herself as a woman. Her vision is vitally particularized by the woman’s point of view. Hardy seemed to ask the question about the rules and laws of the
society which are purely man made. He wished to suggest that these laws and rules should be changed as the circumstances allow. This is put in the mouth of Sue when she says to Phillotson "Domestic laws should be made according to temperament, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comforts in others" (Ibid, p.220)

Sue interrogates about this system of marriage, she asks, whether marriage is a religious binding or a social contract. She says---"If a marriage ceremony is a religious thing it is possibly wrong, but it is only a sordid contract based on material convenience in house holding, rating and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children making it necessary that the male parent should be known." (Ibid, p 208) Sue is successful in persuading Phillotson about the issue of their separation. She succeeds in changing the conventional beliefs of Phillotson. He is so impressed with her interpretation that he tries to convince the same to his friend Gillingham. He explains his decision to a friend, Gillingham, saying that there is in the attachment of Sue and her lover an extraordinary affinity or sympathy which somehow takes away "all flavour of grossness." Their supreme desire, Phillotson goes on to say "is to be together—to share each others emotions, and fancies and dreams. Gillingham asks if their
love is Platonic and Phillotson replies, “Well, no Shelleyan would be nearer to it. They remind one of Laon and Cythna. Also of Paul and Virginia a little. The more I reflect, the more entirely I am on their side” (Laon and Cythna are the true lovers in Shelley’s long narrative poem ‘The Revolt of Islam’ and there is something ethereal about their love. (Ibid, p. 230) It shows that both Shelley and Hardy believe that love is an affinity of the mind and the spirit, which is a great deal more important than sex. Shelley has also influenced Sue’s character, Sue is continually seen as a spiritual rather than a physical woman, and in this way she is strongly connected to the ethereal heroine of Shelly’s “Epipsy Chidion.” Phillotson is of the view that why shouldn’t be there a family only of a woman and her children without a man while becoming more candid about his thought he also says that “And yet I don’t see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man” (Ibid, 230) His decision of making Sue free rises out of his awakening that she should not be bound to any relationship which is only on paper.

No doubt it makes Sue realize the futility of fighting against the social taboos and so she decides to go back to Phillotson to set the things right. But it is only under the weight of religious and social forces. It is also fate that compels her to take this decision
because her children die at the same time. After all being a mother she stoops and decides to go back to the same social norms to which she used to criticize. She is bewildered by the religious thoughts and so she concerns her unconventional act as the reason for her children's death. After her final downfall she utters-

"We must confirm! All the ancient wrath of the power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creature; and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God." (Ibid, p. 337)

What Sue and Jude try to do is, to live under the same roof as husband and wife, without binding themselves by the conventional tie of marriage, which, in fact, is quite a shocking thing to the Victorian era. This is explained when Jude remarks——

"Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we; to think we could act as pioneers! Being a new woman even Sue also says that "I may feel as well as you that I have a perfect right to live with you as you thought - from this moment. I may hold the opinion that, in a proper state of society, the father of a woman's child will be as much a private matter of hers as the cut of her underlinen, on whom nobody will have any right to question her. (Ibid, p. 237)

As a matter of fact Sue's inconsistency causes confusion and frustration in Jude because in his imagination she is ideal but in
reality she does not live up to this ideal. Rather she is psychologically complex woman, and she therefore does not fit in to the mould that Jude has made for her. One way of accounting for Sue’s caprice, is, to see it as stemming from the contradiction inherent in her name, Bridehead. While the first syllable suggests her suitability for marriage, the second makes her cautious to preserve her maidenhead. This explains why she consented to live with the undergraduate (whom she met before knowing Jude), to whom she would not surrender herself. Likewise she cannot bear and quote the necessity of being responsive to Phillotson whenever he wishes and the Victorian values dictate that it is her role to be responsive to her husband. Sue is conscious of her nature, she is also aware of her deliberate actions. At the shepherd’s cottage when Sue and Jude have to spend a night (because they are already too late to catch the train back to Manchester) Jude expresses to Sue his view that she is a product of civilization and that she seems to have nothing unconventional at all about her. She however disagrees with him and describes herself as an Ishmaelite (that is, one who is at war with society. (Ibid, p. 139) Her action of spending a night out of her hostel in
Jude's company shows her unconventionality. Even her action of escaping from the hostel shows not only an independent-mindedness but a spirit of defiance. She cares little for the hostel rules and its code of conduct and discipline. In fact Sue's this act is not wrong even from the other hostel resident's point of view. Besides they take Sue's side against the authorities and they even send a 'round robin' to the principal protesting against the action taken against Sue. In short what Sue does is supported by others but it is only Sue who can do it.

At Jude's resident Sue attacks on the attitude of the man, because her embarrassment in putting on Jude's garments is very slight. Sue does say that it is odd for Jude to see her in a man's clothes and all her own things hanging there in the room to dry. She nullifies the male approach by saying that, "Yet what nonsense she says with reference to her garments: "They are only a woman's clothes—sexless cloths and linen!" (Ibid, p. 145) It shows that Sue is certainly a girl whose ideas are in advance of her time to leaven her as a new woman. She believes in the relations between a man and a woman quite differently. In this matter she is quite different from the other women. She explains to Jude that "My liking for you is not as some
women's perhaps. But it is a delight in being with you, of a supremely
delicate kind and I don't want to go further and risk it by - an attempt to
intensify it! I quite realized that, as woman with man, it was a risk to come.
But, as me with you, I resolved to trust you to set my wishes above your
gratification."(Ibid, p.238) When Jude insists her to marry with him
Sue throws light on the fact that "fewer women like marriage than
Jude supposes only they enter in to it for the dignity it is assumed
to confer, and the social advantages it gains them sometimes - a
dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without."
(Ibid, p. 256) When Sue sees the newly wedded couple she
imagines that 'the flowers in the bride's hand are sadly like the garland
which decked the heifers of sacrifice in old times!'(Ibid, p. 283) In short
she thinks about the bride as a goat or heifer which is taken for the
sacrifice at the time of any rituals. Sue suffers on a large scale for
shelter, when they do not get roof on their head due to the norms
of the society. On the other hand she bluntly answers to one of the
landladies telling her the futility of marriage when the landlady
asks her "Are you really a married woman?" Sue hesitates and then
impulsively tells that her husband and herself had each been unhappy in
their first marriages, after which, terrified at the thought of a second
irrevocable union, and lest the conditions of the contract should kill their
love, yet wishing to be together, they had literally not found the courage to repeat it, though they had attempted it two or three times. Therefore, though in her own sense of the words she was a married woman, in the landlady’s sense she was not. (Ibid, p. 325) Her thoughts suit to a new woman.

Sue is unconventional even in some other cases, for instance, Sue does not believe in prayer at all. She frankly tells Jude that, if she were to join him in his evening prayer, she would be acting in a hypocritical manner. Unlike Jude, Sue has no respect for Christminster. She expresses her views about intellect and Christminster that - “intellect and Christminster is new wine in old bottles”, she says adding that the medievalism of Christminster must go or Christminster will itself have to go. As for Jude, he thinks that Christminster has much that is glorious. She emphasizes her difference with Jude by saying that Christminster is “an ignorant place, except as to the townpeople, artizans, drunkards and paupers.” (Ibid, p. 150) Sue ironically refers to the Christian saints as “as the demi -gods in Jude’s Pantheon” and as “those legendary persons.” She also says that she does not regard marriage as a Sacrament. She says to Jude “How strange of you to stay apart from her like this! You such a religious man. How will the demigods in your Pantheon ---I mean those legendary persons you call saints -intercede for you after
this? Now if I had done such a thing it would have been different and not remarkable for I at least don't regard marriage as a sacrament. Your theories are not so advanced as your practice!" (Ibid, p. 166) In short she behaves like Voltairean as Jude calls her (because Voltaire was frankly skeptical about Christian teaching and Christian gospels. (Ibid, p. 152) This remark needed an adventure to bring before the readers which was quite impossible in Victorian era but Thomas Hardy ventured to comment on this.

Sue is the first woman who clearly explains her expectations about her husband directly to him. Her choice for her partner is quite embarrassing to the Victorian period as she says in this connection - "But I did want and long to ennable some man to high aims, and when I saw you, and knew you wanted to be my comrade. I shall confess it? --- thought that man might be you." (Ibid p.153) Commenting on the system of marriage Hardy pointed out the shortcomings of this system which is conventional and supposed to be mandatory for a bride that is "Giving away" of a bride. It is pointed out by Sue's opposition to orthodox practice of giving away the bride; she thinks why should a woman need somebody to give her away in marriage, when the bridegroom does not stand in need of any such giver away? She says "Jude, will you give me away? I have nobody else
who could do it so conveniently as you, being the only married relation I have here on the spot, even if my father were friendly enough to be willing, which he isn’t. I hope you won’t think it a trouble? I have been looking at the marriage service in the prayer-book, and it seems to me very humiliating that a giveraway should be required at all.” (Ibid, p. 170) In short Sue does not relish the idea that a woman should be regarded as inferior to a man. She thinks it humiliating that a giver-away should be needed for a woman even though she, like the bridegroom may have chosen her partner of her own free will and pleasure. She bluntly criticizes it by saying a woman has to be given away “like a she-ass, or she-goat or any other domestic animal.” (Ibid, p.170) She expresses these opinions in a letter to Jude written in a sarcastic tone.

Thomas Hardy hoped that ‘to err is human’, so though Sue is wrong to select Phillotson as her husband but she should be given a chance to reform herself. Sue herself remarks that woman should have the right to undo this kind of wrong she says, “I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly. I dare say it happens to lots of women, only they submit, and I kick.” (Ibid, p.213)
In the words of Duffin 'the most important distinctive and interesting element in her nature is certain sexlessness. And the concentrated essential perfume of this lily, the trait by which she is Sue Bridehead, is her desire for marriage without physical sex union. This alone will be sufficient to damn her at the tribunal of half humanity. The conception is, of course, not put forth in Jude the Obscure, for the first time. The term, Platonic affection has been often abused but Sue's ideal of sexless union of spirits might claim some analogy with that which Socrates and his great pupil intended by love. (Duffin, p.222)

To sum up, Hardy's art of women characterization it is equally important to note that Hardy portrayed his women full of vivid qualities, calibers and attributes. Hardy's heroines are all attractive, beautiful, and charming as Hardy spoke of Tess's mouth, teeth, eyes, colour and shape, lips as attractive. Tess was a fine and handsome girl - not handsomer than others possibly - but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. She wore a red ribbon in her hair, and was the only one of the white company who could boast of such a pronounced adornment. As she looked round Durbeyfield was
seen moving along the road in a chaise belonging to The Pure Drop driven by a frizzle -head brawny damsel with her gown sleeves rolled above her elbows.

Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience. The dialect was on her tongue to some extent despite the village school: the characteristic intonation of that dialect for this distinct being the voicing approximately rendered by the syllable, probably as rich an utterance as any to be found in human speech. The pouted-up deep mouth to which this syllable was native had hardly as yet settled in to its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word. Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along today for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then. Yet few knew, and still fewer considered this. A small minority, mainly strangers, would look long at her in casually passing by, and grow momentarily fascinated by her freshness, and wonder if they
would ever see her again: but to almost everybody she was a fine picturesque country girl, and no more. (T.D. p.26)

Elizabeth Jane, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* appears as a well formed young woman about eighteen, completely possessed of that ephemeral precious essence, youth, which is itself, beauty irrespective of complexion. Hardy also writes about Elizabeth when her mother surveys her thoughtfully and thinks, ‘the sun shone in at the door upon the young woman’s head and hair, which was worth loose, so that the rays streamed in to its depths as into a hazel copse. Her face, though somewhat wan and incomplete, possessed the raw materials of beauty in a promising degree. She was handsome in the bone, hardly as yet handsome in the flesh. She possibly might never be fully handsome, unless the carking accidents of her daily existence could be evaded before the mobile parts of her countenance had settled to their final mould, the desire sober and repressed - of Elizabeth Jane’s heart was indeed to see, to hear and to understand. How could she become a woman of wider knowledge, higher repute - ‘better’ as she termed it - this was her constant inquiry of her mother.’ (The M. of C. p.57)
Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, is also so beautiful girl that when she looks at herself in the mirror she blushes to find that she is as beautiful as she thought herself to be. When she first visits the Casterbridge market, she is the object of all male eyes. Hardy described about Eustacia in *The Return of the Native* as full limbed and somewhat heavy, without ruddiness, as without pallor and soft to the touch as a cloud. To see her hair is to fancy that a whole winter does not contain darkness enough to form its shadow. She has pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. Her mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss, though full, each corner of her mouth is as clearly cut as the point of a spear. Her presence brought memories of Bourbon roses, rubies tropical midnights, and eclipses. In a dim light, and with a slight rearrangement of her hair, her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities. The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dew drops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena or Hera respectively with as close an approximation to the
antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvases.

(The R. of Nat. p.63-65)

Sue Bridehead, in 'Jude the Obscure' is presented before us through her photograph which shows a pretty girlish face. Later it is described that Sue has a light, slight, elegant figure. There is nothing statuesque in her, she is mobile living. She is also described as "the bright -eyed vivacious girl with a broad forehead and a pile of dark hair about it."

This kind of characterization of women inclines us to think Hardy as a writer of feminine sensibilities.
References


2) Das Kamala, *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*, 1973


