CHAPTER-IV

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AWARENESS OF HARDY'S WOMEN CHARACTERS
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Though Hardy’s heroines are independent, rebellious and New Women, they are ceremonious, besides they have also good psychological and social awareness. They don’t lack essential manners which every human being should observe while living in the society. There are characters like Eustacia and Sue behaving unconventionally, but it is noticed that they do not get victory and eventually surrender to the religion and social ethics. The characters like Tess, Bathsheba, Susan and Elizabeth Jane, are not only submissive women but they are compliant wives. In the novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', Susan, Michael Henchard’s wife reveals the state of her mind during the period that she spends with Newson and it results into her search for her first husband, Henchard. It would not be wrong to say that being aware of the social restrictions and her nature of obedience Susan accepts Newson as her husband when she is sold to him by Michael Henchard only for the sum of five pounds, till one day the absurdity of her situation dawns upon her mind. She even asks
Newson that she has begun to doubt whether it is right and proper on her part to continue to live with him any longer. Susan is also mindful of the responsibility of mother. She is quite anxious of her daughter's i.e. Elizabeth's future. So as soon as she comes across the man Farfrae, she decides him to be her son in law and she tactfully arranges the meeting between Elizabeth and Farfrae, by sending a note to both of them. She is so worried about her daughter's future that she writes a secret note for Michael Henchard and she addresses it in the following way -

"To Michael Henchard and not to be opened till Elizabeth Jane's wedding day". (The, M.of.C.p.147) It is Susan who cares for her daughter whereas; Michael Henchard had sold his daughter along with his wife before twenty one years. It shows that it is always woman who cares more for her children than man who many times behaves recklessly. Susan's following quotation proves her to be more careful about her daughter's future when she writes in her letter to Michael Henchard------

"My Dear Michael - For the good of all of us I have kept one thing a secret from you till now, I hope you will understand why, I think you will though perhaps you may not forgive me. But dear Michael, I have done it for the best. I shall be in my grave when you read this, and Elizabeth Jane will have a
home. Don’t curse me, Mike – think of how I was situated. I can hardly write it, but here it is, Elizabeth Jane is not your Elizabeth Jane- the child who was in my arms when you sold me. No; she died there month after that and this living one is my other husband’s I christened her by the same home we had given to the first and she filled up the ache I felt at the other’s loves. Michael I am dying and I might have held my tongue, but I could not tell her husband of this or not as you may judge and forgive, if you can a woman you can once deeply wronged as she forgives you.” (Ibid, p.153)

SUSAN HENCHARD

The above passage shows that though Susan Henchard Newson does not tell Michael Henchard about the fact of Elizabeth’s life, she does not altogether want to keep it secret from him. She writes a note which definitely helps her to discharge both of her responsibilities. The first is that she wishes a good life-partner for her daughter as well as she wants to be honest to Michael Henchard by telling the truth. She is quite aware of the results of her telling truth to Michael Henchard before Elizabeth Jane’s marriage with Donald Farfrae. She knows that Henchard will not be helpful to Elizabeth, for no man can be ready to compromise with the issue of his lineage. It is Susan alone who cares for her daughters both by Henchard and by Newson. After the remarriage
of Susan and Michel Henchard, when Henchard decides to change the name of Elizabeth Jane Newson to Miss Elizabeth Jane Henchard, Susan skillfully objects this and turns the situation skillfully. Susan does not permit Elizabeth to change her name; because she knows that she is really the daughter of the genial sailor and the desired change in her surname would be an insult to Newson's memory. At the same time she does not like to keep Henchard in dark about the real parentage of Elizabeth. Susan knows the tricks very well to oversee the critical conditions of life as she is inured to the male ego. She smartly explains that the colour of Elizabeth's hair has turned lighter with the passing of years as Henchard doubts about her hairs which he remembers that her hairs were brown. She tries to remain true to the fact that Elizabeth Jane is not Henchard’s daughter but she is the daughter of Newson. Her keeping this secret does not mean only to acquire shelter for her but she hopes for the better future of Elizabeth Jane. Susan’s desires, hopes, ambitions move around her daughter, Elizabeth Jane. The only activity which she does actively and consciously is that of a mother. We never find her trying to have any control over her own situation. She only tries to adjust herself
with everything that happens to her, after the (supposed) death of her second husband Newson, Susan comes back to Henchard and the reason for her return, as she explains is:

"I thought, I owed his faithfulness to the end of our lives - foolishly I believed there was something solemn and binding in the bargain. I thought that even in honour I dared not desert him when he had paid so much for me in good faith. I meet you now only as his widow - I consider myself that and that I have no claim upon you. Had he not died, I should never have come - never of that may you be sure." (The M. of C., Ch. II, p. 103)

The above description explains the severe obligations of the ideology of womanhood on Susan. Before she dies she discloses the matter before Elizabeth that it is she who has sent the letter to them, because it is her wish that the two of them should get married.

Susan dies by discharging her responsibilities though Donald Farfrae does not marry with Elizabeth later on, as Hardy's heroines hardly succeed in their planning. Nonetheless she may be called successful in attaining paternal security to Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Jane in the same novel is also a girl of complete social awareness. Elizabeth Jane when arrives with her mother in search of Michael Henchard she decides to perform the duties of a
temporary waitress and serves food to the guests in order to pay the landlord for lodging and food for herself and for her mother. Thomas Hardy himself comments about Elizabeth Jane that "If there is one good thing more than another which characterized this single hearted girl it was willingness to sacrifice her personal comfort and dignity to the common weal" (Ibid, Ch. VII, p. 75) After being accepted by Michael Henchard, Elizabeth tries to refine her manners and standard of living. She tries to become sophisticated and develops her tastes for clothes. After being praised by the people she does not lose her head or become arrogant. On the other hand with reference to the praises which people shower on her she says to herself "There is something wrong in all this. If they only know what an unfinished girl I am - that I can't talk Italian or use globes or shows any of the accomplishments they learn at boarding school, how they would despise me!" (Ibid, Ch.XV, p. 126) In other words Elizabeth Jane is acutely aware of the lack of certain accomplishments (weaknesses) in herself. Her awareness is quite praiseworthy. She neither boasts of anything nor hides anything from the society. Elizabeth Jane easily believes in Henchard and she does not ask for any justification from Michael Henchard when he tells her that she is his daughter
and not Newson's before the fact is disclosed. She behaves sensibly and appeals to Henchard in humble way-

"I have thought and thought all night of it. And I see everything must be as you say. And I am going to look upon you as the father that you are and not to call you Mr. Henchard any more...........!" (Ibid, Ch XIX, p.156)

Elizabeth feels restless by Henchard's unexpected behaviour towards her. She is so cognizant of her identity that she leaves Henchard due to his hostile treatment. Despite her frustration due to Henchard's treatment to her and her thought of death, she keeps her head, faces the situation positively and begins to live with Lucetta accepting the job offered by her. Hardy's heroines are well acquainted with the sodal conditions; they look at these very positively and are never discouraged due to these adverse circumstances. Elizabeth Jane, though, decides to leave Henchard, does not like to do it without his permission, and waits for him. She does not clearly express the reason why she wants to leave Henchard but, like a girl of conscience, explains that she is getting an opportunity of becoming more cultured and polished. She also says that she has been offered a post in a household where she can
have advantages of study and observing a life of refinement. She is so determined that Henchard's efforts to stop her are bootless.

Hardy showed some of his heroines, quite stirring and subtle dealing with the problems they face. They are not mere workers and stereotype women bearing all the problems meekly and mutely. They have good sense of using their logic to get the problem solved. In an unexpected meeting between Farfrae and Lucetta, Elizabeth quickly clears doubts in her mind about their relations. It appears to her that Farfrae and Lucetta are already acquainted with each other. On learning this she becomes more careful in observing the movements of Lucetta. One day, when Lucetta returns home after having gone out for some time, Elizabeth sees a flush on Lucetta's cheeks which gives an indication to Elizabeth that Lucetta and Farfrae have met each other. To confirm herself she directly asks Lucetta whether she has met Farfrae and she receives the expected answer. Her maturity is also seen in this matter when she neither blames Farfrae nor Lucetta despite her love for Farfrae. On the other hand it is seen about her that she has no illusions of any kind and she does not overestimate her own beauty and capabilities. Elizabeth is shown
by Hardy as realist woman because she accepts Lucetta's superiority to her. She says she is nothing beside Lucetta. She herself makes it clear that she is as one of the meaner beauties of the night when the moon had risen in the sky. Very few women have this sense of self-introspection. Rather she is aware that it is quite natural for both of them to be attracted by the superior beauties. Thomas Hardy has expressed very high opinions about Elizabeth's sacrifice in the following words - "She had learnt the lesson of renunciation and was as familiar with the wreck of each day's wishes as with the diurnal setting of the sun. If her earthly career had taught her few book philosophies it had at least well practiced her in this. Yet her experience had consisted less in a series of pure disappointments than in a series of substitutions. Continually it had happened that what she had desired had not been granted her, and that what had been granted her she had not desired." (Ibid, Ch. XXV, p.204) Elizabeth uses her sense of understanding even in the matter of Henchard when he enforces Lucetta to marry with him. Elizabeth dislikes this and prohibits Michael Henchard from doing this unpleasant act. She is not even enticed by the offer which Henchard gives her in his explanations that his act would help her to get back her Farfrae. It is because, she is not selfish. Besides she is quite doubtful about Lucetta's
behaviour towards Michael and her way of addressing to him as she calls him "Mr. Henchard" because it shows an intimate relationship between them. It is her presence of mind that she always tries to find out the fact than kneeling before it. It is her psychological awareness which enables her to think over this matter and she sums up this matter astutely. Elizabeth is also an honest girl and she knows better the conditions of Michael Henchard's mind, so she immediately conveys Donald Farfrae about the danger which he may face due to Michael Henchard. Her decision is proved beneficial both for Henchard and Farfrae. It is because she thinks that Henchard should not commit any crime and Farfrae should also be saved. Had there been any other woman instead of Elizabeth she would have thought of taking revenge against Farfrae, but she is the woman who does not live with such malicious motives in her mind. Thomas Hardy himself passed his complements about Elizabeth's judgment and power of observation — "A seer's spirit took possession of Elizabeth, impelling her to sit down by the fire and divine events so surely from data already her own that they could be held as witnessed" (Ibid, Ch. XXIV, p.197)
Elizabeth does not think of revenge neither against Farfrae nor Lucetta. Besides being a perceptive woman she helps both Farfrae and Lucetta. When she comes to know about the skimmity ride she goes in to the room of Lucetta in great haste as if there is something urgent that she wants to tell her. Elizabeth Jane tries to close the window but Lucetta does not allow her to do so. When Lucetta, looks out of the window she comes across a strange sight that there is a big crowd and a donkey with two effigies. They are seated on the donkey and their elbows are tied together. One effigy faces the donkey’s head while the other faces the tail. What surprises Lucetta more is that one effigy is her own and the other is of Henchard. It affects her to faint and fall into a swoon. Elizabeth Jane, forgetting everything about the past sends for the doctor and nurses her well. Elizabeth Jane is a woman of helping nature, free from any malevolent feelings though she has been hurt by the same persons. Her consideration of every matter is always from the humanitarian point of view. Being a woman, love and sympathy reside in her on an ample scale. Hardy’s heroines can be called as fully aware of the social manners. It is only in the end of the novel that Elizabeth is angry and somewhat aggressive,
but, her approach is quite natural, because had there been any other woman in place of her, she would have reacted the same. Elizabeth explains to Henchard when he comes to give her marriage gift, that he has not only deceived her but also her father. Her action can be justified because, Elizabeth, in search of her real father, is pushed like a ball from one end to another and suffers tremendously. Her derision towards Henchard is proved time-being because soon after her marriage, she makes an honest search of Henchard. On getting the news of his death she expresses her feelings of remorse about her behaviour which she shows to Henchard, she repents in the following words--

'Oh! I would not have minded so much it had not been for my unkindness at that last parting! (Ibid, Ch. XLIV, p.353) In short she apprehends her unfairness and cruelty to Henchard in her last meeting with him. This awareness of Elizabeth has been pointed out skillfully by Thomas Hardy because she philosophically explains that neither she nor any human being deserves less than is given to him or her, and that there are others receiving less who deserve much more.

Thomas Hardy’s another major heroine Bathsheba Everdene, in 'Far From the Madding Crowd' also lives for the social and
psychological matters of life. Bathsheba, in the beginning is a parentless girl. It is due to her good fortune that she gets the property of her uncle and she becomes rich. Despite, it is taxing to handle such big property, Bathsheba accepts this challenge and successfully runs her business using her social and psychological perception. Whenever she is unsuccessful in her efforts, it is her knack which recovers her soon from any loss. No doubt she has vanity and love of flattery but at the same time it is also clear that she is by no means a flirt. She is no schemer for marriage. She combines coquetry with dignity and vanity with a high seriousness. She is very much proud of her vanity and purity until she meets Troy. Until then her lips are touched by no man’s on earth and her waist has never been encircled by a lover’s arm. She never by look, word or sign tries to attract the man towards her. Though she is a girl of vanity, she is much aware of her social obligations. When Oak goes to sleep in his hut with both the ventilators closed and with the stove burning which caused him to faint and lie unconscious, it is Bathsheba who courageously helps him to bring him to the conscious. She sprinkles water on his face and neck and unbuttons his collar. She guesses the situation only
with the hint given by the barking dog near Oak's hut. Being impressed by Bathsheba, when Oak falls in love with her and proposes her for marriage she refuses his proposal. On being asked by Oak about the reason of running after him she makes it clear to him that her aunt has told him lie about a dozen young men courting her because of her good looking. Though she does not wish to marry him, she even does not want to allow creating any misunderstanding in his mind about her. Bathsheba is an honest girl so she does not like that any mendacious news should be spread about her. She is quite aware of her dignity and so she runs after Oak to tell him not only her refusal but also the fact of her life. She is so aware of her own status that she thinks about her would be husband who would tame her because she is a woman without any money and is staying with her aunt for bare maintenance. She likes to marry with the man whom she loves and as she does not love Oak she does not like to give her consent for their marriage. Apart from this feeling she is also very much aware of her education that she is more educated than Oak is. When Oak expresses his feeling about his marriage with a rich woman, Bathsheba determines that it is quite impossible for her even to
think of his proposal of marriage and she remains firm on her decision till the circumstances compel her to get marry with Oak at the end of the novel. Her refusal of Oak’s proposal and her pity against him to offer him job are quite remarkable aspects of her personality, particularly when fortune makes her strong to be an employer. She does not allow Oak’s past to intervene in her appointing him as a shepherd on her farm. Bathsheba is sensible to her every action, even if she errors, she soon restores from her mistakes. On being noticed the disturbed mental condition of Boldwood due to her valentine note she feels sorry to have offended a respectable and serious minded person. She makes up her mind to beg his pardon for her wrong done to him on the next occasion of their meeting. She thinks “I didn’t—I know I ought never to have dreamt of sending that valentine-forgive me, sir, it was a wanton thing which no woman with any self respect should have done- If you will only pardon my thoughtfulness I promise never to.” (Far. F. the Mad, Crd. Ch. XIX, p.566) But soon she interrogates herself about the viability of this action. She even does not think Boldwood as a suitable husband for her, though he is loved by many other maidens. It may be because of his overage that she neglects him. She is quite
circumspect from this incident and decides not to interrupt the steady life of Boldwood either by look or by sign in future. It is because she is not a coquette. Being a responsible woman she is quite vigilant at all times about her chastity. She prefers to enquire Gabriel about the reactions of the people about her encounter with Boldwood when she is found engaged in conversation with him. On being learnt about the people's reactions she soon makes it clear to Oak that she is not going to marry Boldwood and also advises him to make it clear to the other people also. When Oak continues to express his opinion about Bathsheba and her conduct, she soon bawls out him saying that she cannot tolerate any criticism of her private conduct from anybody. Finding very close to Bathsheba, when Oak tries to make her aware of her conduct, she does not allow Gabriel to behave above his station. She even does not care when Oak threatens her to leave the job.

It is only her wariness about her sheep that she sends for Gabriel again to save the lives of sheep after being poisoned. She cannot bear this sight and so makes a retreat under these circumstances. She does not allow herself to be obstinate for the sake of her ego but soon yields to the circumstances. When
Gabriel becomes obstinate expecting more polite request from Bathsheba, she denies for the same in the beginning but one more death of a sheep moves her and she soon scribbles a note requesting Gabriel to come and adds the following words at the end “Do not desert me, Gabriel!” (Ibid, Ch. XXI, p.574)

This shows her sense of compromise which she accepts according to the contexts. Though Bathsheba is a woman of vanity she likes to be appreciated by someone but she accepts these complements only from the man who is equal to her rank and who she likes.

Bathsheba is not an anti romantic heroine but her love is quite fastidious. No doubt she is deceived by sergeant Troy but it is her fate and not Bathsheba herself which is responsible for her unhappiness. Sergeant Troy flatters her paying more compliments to her in almost accomplished manner till Bathsheba inwardly melts towards him. He calls her the most fascinating woman the most beautiful he has ever seen, he tells her that a woman like her would be desired by at least hundred men but that she can marry only one leaving the other ninety nine disappointed and broken hearted. Bathsheba replies that she draws no pleasure from his talk, while actually she enjoys his compliments. She has the
awareness which any responsible, young and virgin lady should have. Bathsheba resists Troy initially for his gift of watch, but when he becomes insistent, she thinks to be sincere and accepts the gift of gold watch. But she is perplexed and bewildered with this act because she thinks that her workmen might be watching her while being forced by Troy to accept the golden watch. She is more baffled when she presses the spring and comes across the inscription written inside which is--------

"Love yields to circumstances". She is quite careful about her chastity so she hesitates to accept the gift of Troy openly. Being felt nonplussed on reading the inscription she says to herself------

"Oh, what have I done? What does it mean! I wish I knew how much of it that man really means!" (Ibid, Ch. XXVI, p.598)

Her soliloquy clearly explains her sense of maturity that she thinks over the matter continuously so that her image should not be damaged by any of her illegal action before her workmen. It is her psychological awareness which tends her to think persistently about her activities. Bathsheba is in the real sense a sensible woman who thinks over the matters associated to her without fail. She is so astute that on being invited by Troy for the sword play,
she hesitates to go with ease and lonely and is afraid of doing this act all by herself. She asks Troy’s permission to bring Liddy with her, but Troy’s refusal being reluctant for this, impels her to go just for some time. She has cognizance of the consequences of all evil things in the future. She is sensible but her sensibility is soon tested by her lot. Her judgment or the criterion for judging the man is not wrong but she is deceived, otherwise she tests Troy by the right measures. She thinks Troy as a regular visitor of the church and his skill in the sword play definitely impresses her more than Gabriel Oak’s honesty or Boldwood’s richness or personality. It is her lot that leads her towards her devastation. Bathsheba Everdene also behaves sometimes as a homespun wife and she knows the duties of a wife very well. She is neither excited nor overbearing but behaves according to her persona. Being a responsible wife Bathsheba appeals Troy to stop his regular visits to race. Troy’s neglecting and blaming her by calling her as ‘Chicken -hearted’ creature beneath all her boldness naturally makes her angry but she keeps her head, like a benevolent wife. Her social awareness thus lays her off from overreacting and helps her to face the complications patiently.
Bathsheba is a woman of good presence of mind. She is quite alert to the happenings around her and reacts subtly and swiftly. Bathsheba quickly objects to the ‘hair’ which she finds with Troy. She instantly remarks that due to its yellow colour it belongs to some other woman. She endures all the harassment given by Troy; thinking herself a submissive wife. Though Bathsheba is jealous of Fanny Robin, whose hair, she finds in her husband’s watch, she does not behave recklessly with her when she is dead. On the other hand she allows Gabriel to bring the coffin of Fanny into the house. She thinks it as an unkind and un-Christian to leave the coffin in the wagon all night. As a wife she is jealous of Fanny and is quite right on her part being a loyal wife but as a woman she is quite socially matured woman quite capable of thinking about such incidents where every now and then men fall short. Bathsheba’s suspicion about Troy’s relation with Fanny also makes her aware of the people in the village who might be talking about this relation. She brings Fanny’s coffin into the house because she does not want to have the feeling that she is an ungenerous or uncharitable towards the dead woman. Bathsheba is a typical wife so she gets angry with Troy due to his barbarous behaviour when
he explains to her that a 'ceremony before a priest could not make a marriage.' She runs out but soon she returns and explains to Liddy that though she had left her house with no intention of going back she had now changed her mind. It is because Bathsheba thinks that women with pride never ran away from their husband. A run away wife would be a burden to herself and to others. A wife should never run away from her house, no matter how badly she was treated by her husband, no matter if she died on account of her husband's ill-treatment. Bathsheba knows very well the duties of a married woman; and the code of conduct of wife as she is ready to face the forthcoming problems. She thinks to keep this domestic matter secret from Liddy, and on being asked by Liddy, she does not disclose anything to her about their problem. When Troy departs without telling anything to her, she like a meek wife waits for him and is quite hopeful that sooner or later her husband would return. She is stunned to hear about her husband's death, though she is aware of his infidelity. She feels depressed and is about to collapse on the ground like a staunch wife. Bathsheba does not like to wear mourning clothes unless she is sure about her husband's death. On the contrary she is firm that
her husband is alive. Even Liddy is astonished to hear her hunch and asks her mistress what makes her think so, Bathsheba cleverly replies that somehow she cannot believe that Troy is dead and justifies her statement by saying that if he had been drowned; his dead body would have been found. She is so submissive that she is ready to keep Fanny’s lock of hair in memory of her, just because of Troy and says she would keep it in memory of her. Bathsheba is well aware of her behaviour in the society therefore she does not like to remarry except her knowledge of the death of her husband.

Bathsheba is woman of strong will power as she has learnt many things around her. She has good intuitions of necessary actions to be taken by her. After Troy’s assumed death Boldwood wishes to marry Bathsheba but she disagrees for the same at least till her own realization of the fact. Simultaneously she also ruminates over her refusal, since she thinks her ‘negation’ may affect Boldwood and perhaps he may go mad. She intends not to ruin Boldwood’s life by keeping her decision intact. When Gabriel suggests her that she may give Boldwood a conditional promise to marry him after six years, Bathsheba cleverly remarks that life has taught her not to commit an act of rashness or folly of which she
might have to repent afterwards. She explains that her heart is absolutely barren of love. She realizes that she has once seriously wronged Boldwood by sending him a valentine and that she cannot now do anything that would break his heart. Hardy has shown his heroines completely aware of social and psychological conditions both subjectively and objectively. Her conversation with Gabriel makes her to expect his decision of love towards her, but she is wondered about his silence and naturally feels little bit disturbed. It is because Bathsheba has no daring to declare her love for Gabriel as she has once refused his love. On being invited by Boldwood for the party arranged by him at his residence Bathsheba persistently feels distressed to attend the party but in deference to his feelings she persuades herself and does not displease Boldwood. Bathsheba’s interpretation to Liddy’s question about the declaration of her marriage with Boldwood is quite rational. She does not make any declaration of marriage with Boldwood whereas she thinks that if she marries at all, it will not be for love.

In the party Bathsheba is quite measured of her behaviour. She neither takes part in dancing nor singing. She is in her
melancholy mood due to the news of her husband’s death. She even thinks to leave the party at her earliest but due to Boldwood’s insistence she has to delay her departure. Bathsheba declines his proposal of marriage and sternly remarks that there is still a doubt in her mind about her husband’s death. Bathsheba even declines for the engagement ring offered by Boldwood thinking it as a regular enjoyment but again due to his insistence she has to keep it. In this connection she prefers to consult a lawyer before committing herself to him. When Boldwood becomes exigent about his proposal, she explains like a discerning person that “If Troy does not return, I will marry you in six years after from this day, if we both live” (Ibid, Ch. LIII, p.718) Bathsheba is a venturesome woman, subject to take the decisions about her life all by herself despite her haplessness of lacking any moral guidance particularly by an elder person. Unfortunately she has to face quite delicate incidents in her life but Bathsheba keeping her head faces the problems and is always successful to overcome the situation. Bathsheba’s wifely attitudes are seen when she is much distressed by the actual death of her husband. When she brings the dead body of Troy after being shot by Boldwood in the party she falls
into a series of fainting fits and her condition seems to have become serious. She continues to speak while groaning that night "O it is my fault. How can I live! O heaven, how can live! (Ibid, Ch. LIV, p.723) She blames herself for her husband’s death; she blames herself for being silent at the time of Boldwood’s shooting at Troy.

Bathsheba is also a virtuous woman. She is long familiar to the fact that a young woman and a widow should not visit the house of a young man like Gabriel who lives alone. It is due to her forlorn condition that she cannot stop herself from going to his house. It is also because she thinks it improper for a single woman like her to call upon a bachelor to her who lives alone. So it is for the first time that she visits Oak’s house. Bathsheba finally understands the mystery of life and accepts the proposal of Gabriel whom she thinks her first lover. She even expects the marriage with the simplest method and restarts her life.

Thomas Hardy’s Tess is also one of the most sensible heroines who are endowed with ample social and psychological awareness. Tess is the eldest child in her family and is quite aware of her own duties towards her family. While enjoying the festival of club-walking she feels somewhat guilty as she thinks that instead of
helping her mother in domestic work she has been enjoying the festival. She is well aware and conscious about her father's health and welfare. She is equally careful about her younger brothers and sisters. There is a gap of two hundred years between Tess and her mother as far as their ideas and attitudes are concerned. When they are together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages are juxtaposed. It is because the mother frequently consults a book called 'The Complete Fortune Teller' and has much faith in it, but Tess is rather skeptical in this matter.

When Tess's father is drunk and tired, he cannot go to the market with the beehives; Tess wants to help the family and so, sacrificing her sleep, offers to go. All through the novel Tess does things for her family and makes sacrifices. As is quite natural for so young girl, an hour, she falls asleep in her wagons. When she gains consciousness, she finds that the 'pointed shaft' of the morning mail-cart, had entered the breast of the unhappy Prince like a sword, she is terribly shocked and dejected. Tess blames herself for the death of prince, a horse; where as nobody in the family blames her. She consistently feels guilty and says ----
"Tis all my doing- all mine! "She cries." No excuse for me -none - What will mother and father live on now? Aby, Aby! We can't go on with one load-
Prince is killed. Why I danced and laughed only yesterday. To think that I was such a fool" (T.D.Ch.IV, p.38) Tess is much aware of her family conditions and sincerely thinks about it. She always disapproves of her mother having thoughtlessly given birth to so many children when it is such a trouble to nurse and to feed them. She knows that the number of children in the family is not only a menace to the family but also to the society. She is aware of the resources what they have in their family to feed the children. It isn't because she is the eldest child in the family but because Tess is a girl who knows the problems of more children in the family. She is quite depressed by the attitude of Alec of molesting her at 'The Slopes'. She is so distressed that it would have been very glad to her to go back home but again her awareness deters her as how could she face her parents, gets back her box and disconcerts the whole scheme for the rehabilitation of her family on such sentimental ground. After being raped by Alec, when Tess returns to her family, she realizes the whispering people in the church and she decides not to go the church. Tess is quite honest about her
past; she does not like to hide it from the person like Angel, who loves her much. Tess tries to persuade Angel by telling him that there are also the beautiful girls like Retty and Izz who are also excellent at dairy-work. Tess simply means to suggest him indirectly to choose one of them as his would-be wife because she herself does not think it proper to be his wife. Tess also decides to avoid his company so that she might not snatch the matrimonial chances of the other girls. She loves Angel but does not want to deceive him by keeping the secret about her past life from him. When she comes to know about Angel’s father that he has a young lady of his own rank in mind as a wife for Angel, Tess stops thinking again about Angel. In fact she believes that, attempts would definitely be made by Angel’s father to find the bride of equal rank as she is well aware of her own rank and status. On being insisted persistently by Angel for marriage Tess declines his proposal using her presence of mind that she would not be accepted by his father and friends. She ardently loves him, but her conscience does not permit her to agree with Angel’s proposal. Due to her past experience she comes to Talbothays with the resolve not to get married. She even does not want to take a step
which might afterwards cause bitter rue to her husband for his blindness in marrying her. In short she does not want to keep her prospective husband in the dark.

Tess asks for the proper guidance from her mother regarding her marriage with Angel. She writes a letter to her enquiring about her confession to Angel about her past. When she does not get any reply from her mother, she writes down the history of the past three or five years of her life and puts the sheets into an envelope addressing Angel Clare. She slips the envelope under the door of Angel’s room. Tess feels it as a great burden over her shoulder to keep it as hush-hush from Angel. But she fails in her effort as Angel does not see this letter and that’s why the weight from her mind cannot be removed. She changes her decision according to the situation thinking that she should not let him read it then, because the house is full of bustle of preparation, it shows her a woman of complete maturity. Till the last moment of their marriage, Tess tries to confess, but it is her mishap that she is not entertained by Angel. She even thinks after her marriage that she has no moral right of to be called as Mrs. Angel Clare. Tess is so sensitive that, on being learnt about the two maid’s efforts of
suicides for the sake of Angel, she comes to a final determination to tell her past to Angel even after her marriage. Though Tess is unaware of the results, she will have to confront after her confession, her social and psychological awareness does not permit her to be clandestine. It is Tess who readily forgives Angel wholeheartedly about his dissipation with a woman and unfortunately she is deserted on account of her confession.

After being separated from Angel, Tess is not discouraged. Though jobless and without any financial resources she does not like to apply to Angel’s parents for any financial assistance, since it is her sense of delicacy and pride which deters her from asking any financial help from her in-laws. For time being she is depressed but soon she cheers up on seeing the suffering of a number of people around her, many of them bleeding and about to die. Her reasoning about the above situation rightly proves to be a woman of social discernment particularly when she thinks---

"Poor darling - to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight of such misery as yours!" She also says "And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled and I be not bleeding and I have two hands to feed and cloths me."(Ibid, Ch. XLI, p.201) Hardy writes about Tess
that she was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had not foundation in Nature. *(Ibid, Ch. XLI, p.201)* Tess’s this noble thought definitely helps her to live life more vigorously because she confronts the social miseries and the life of the people who are more hapless than her.

In fact Angel has forsaken Tess, but they are not separated legally from each other by taking divorce that is why though Angel does not have any love in his mind about Tess, she has yet full respect for him as her husband. Alec’s irritation to her by calling Angel as ‘mule’ makes her so indignant that she flings her leather glove directly in his face. She tries to be loyal to her husband until they are not separated by divorce. Tess rejects the help offered by Alec to her though she badly needs as she knows that Alec’s any kind of help would impel her to surrender his whim. Her clear explanation to him that she would take nothing from him directly either for herself or for her family members shows her pride and a feeling of self respect. On the contrary she feels it worthy to appeal her husband to come back and render some help to her instead of accepting any help from the man like
Alec. It is only because of the continuous indifference of her husband that she tends to think that Alec D’Urbervilles is alone her husband as far as physical relations are concerned. But it is only when she feels underprivileged and helpless.

Tess continues to fight against the hostile circumstances till the end of her life. Tess is more heedful about her family members than herself. Being aware of the punishment, she will have to undergo after killing Alec, she requests Angel to marry her young sister Liza-Lu. On Angel’s refusal about this proposal, she insists him by giving him the instances that people married sister-in-law continually in Marlott and other village nearby. She accepts the justice as she acknowledges her crime and explains “It is as it should be, Angel I am almost glad - yes glad! This happiness could not have lasted.”(Ibid, Ch. LVIII,p.278)

The characters like Thomasin and Eustacia Wye are also decently full-blown in the novel like “The Return of the Native.” They have also decorous, social and psychological sentience. Though they have their own creed, they are not completely unaware of the social norms. Even the character like Mrs. Yeobright is also a woman of sound commonsense. She is proved
to be a good caretaker of the girl like Thomasin. Mrs. Yeobright uses her presence of mind for the marriage of Thomasin with Wildeve when Wildeve tries to seduce both Thomasin and Eustacia. At this juncture Mrs. Yeobright’s declaration to Wildeve about the Reddleman’s offer of marriage with Thomasin obliges him to take decision on her favour. In the beginning Wildeve declares that he would not make any further efforts to meet Thomasin, and if Thomasin wants to marry the other man, he would not stand in the way. But Mrs. Yeobright tactfully binds him in the compact that he would not in anyway renew his suit and would not in anyway interfere in Thomasin’s marriage with the other man. It obliges Wildeve to ask for one or two days to consider the matter. Finally this conversation comes to an end with Wildeve’s promise that he will not communicate with Thomasin without informing Mrs. Yeobright. Mrs. Yeobright’s such suggestion definitely makes Wildeve quite dizzy and compels him to think about this matter more seriously than earlier. Finally Mrs. Yeobright succeeds in her plan and Wildeve has to marry with Thomasin. It is due to Mrs. Yeobright’s trick that Wildeve is able to declare his decision anticipated by her. It can be said that Mrs.
Yeobright has sheer knowledge of man’s nature and so she cleverly deals with the situation and that is why ultimately Thomasin gets her bridegroom. At the same time Eustacia is also more conscious than Wildeve. As Wildeve is turned skillfully by Mrs. Yeobright, he comes to Eustacia with his readiness to take her to America, but Eustacia being a clever woman does not fall prey to his schemes but explains him that, Wildeve has given Mrs. Yeobright one week to consider that proposition, and that she will not go with him just because the other woman (Thomasin) does not wish to marry him. She also cleverly explains that she will not like to be treated as a stop-gap. On being reminded by Wildeve about her declaration of love before one month, she equally asks for one more month for thinking over the matter. She cleverly asks herself if Thomasin no longer wanted Wildeve, she should not think of him. It is because Eustacia infers her social superiority over Wildeve whereas previously she has no awareness of the same. She even feels, for the first time, that she has lowered herself by loving that man like Wildeve. As Viniodkumar Maheshwari writes ‘from the authorial comment from time to time on the lonely and beautiful personality of Eustacia Vye one notes that she
is a woman of parts' in spite of her being passionately restless. She was a queer mixture of carnality and of spirituality -to speak in a secular sense. Her restlessness was an index to be above the gysome impulses associated with women of raw instinctuality. Even as Eustacia Vye is a woman of highly touchy temperament, she has her own ways of putting brakes on her mercurial temperament. For example when the quaintly -attired reddleman Diggory Venn, comes to see Eustacia Vye with a suggestion to persuade Damon Wildeve to marry Thomasin Yeobright, before it is too late, for it is not possible for Thomasin to linger on indefinitely in favour of Damon Wildeve, she does not get excited unnecessarily. Rather, Eustacia is commonsensical in her replies'.

(Maheshwari, p.53)

Eustacia is not appeased by the reddleman’s praise of her beauty. She remains cool and speaks realistically. She is sensitive in defending her status and honour. Due to an ardent desire of Eustacia to see Clym Yeobright, she uses her presence of mind by making up her mind to disguise herself as male and act in the play to be performed at Clym’s residence. Feeling jealous about Thomasin and Yeobright, Eustacia thinks to have presented herself
before him in her real form as she is confident about her beauty. Though the relations between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright prove to be hostile which results into the death of Mrs. Yeobright, Eustacia admits her guilt; she says to Wildeve that "I am to blame for this. There is evil in store for me. O, what shall I do?" (The R.of the Nat., Bk. IV, Ch. VIII, p.307) Being depressed by this fact she thinks to commit suicide. This shows her sense of psychological realism. Her situation becomes moving and she asks herself "Why should I not die if I wish?" She says to Charley "I have made a bad bargain with life and I am weary of it - weary" (Ibid, Ch. IV- Book V, p.340) Eustacia's cogitation about her crime and to be in rueful deportment about the same, is an excellent example of her psychological awareness.

Eustacia, being unconventional, suffers much but eventually takes on all her flaws. When she becomes penniless, she neither likes to ask for money to Wildeve nor to live at her grandfather's house. She thinks it unlawful for a married woman to live at grandfather's house for any long time. She is overcome by a feeling of desperation and introspects herself -------

"How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman "she says to herself that "and how destiny has been against me! I do not deserve my lot! O, thy cruelty
been injured and blighted 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.350)

Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* is no doubt a new woman and unconventional in her behaviour, but she stoops before the social conditions. In other words, had she not been aware of the social conditions she would not have taken the decision of going back to Phillotson. Besides she presents herself as a woman of strong social and psychological awareness. While working as a teacher along with Richard Phillotson, she tries earnestly to perform her job rather impressively. At the time of inspection in the school she demands Mr. Phillotson that he should have told her about the inspector’s surprise visit. It is because she is afraid of the manager of the school, because she would be reported that she is not good and would be discharged for ever. But it is explained by Phillotson that Sue is the best teacher. Although she is well acquainted with Jude, her cousin, and is attracted slightly by his charms, she is well aware of her promise given to Phillotson about their marriage. She has well plan about her future as she explains Jude that “I have promised - I have promised -that I will marry him when
I come out of the training school two years hence, and have got my certificate; his plan being that we shall then take a large double school in great town—he the boys' and I the girls'—as married school teachers often do, and make a good income between us.” (J.O. Part III, Ch.I, p.134)

Sue adheres to her promise of marriage with Phillotson that is why she suggests Jude not to meet her again and just correspond with each other at long intervals on purely business matters. Though Sue has rebellious feelings against the patriarchal conventions, she is not against any man. In other words she declines the patriarchate. She has quite high opinions about her friend at Christminster. She frankly admits that her friend taught her a great deal and lent her books which she should never had got hold of otherwise. She has even high opinion about the general men in the society. She has passable knowledge of the nature of men in general. She says—

'I have no fear of men as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them—one or two of them particularly—almost as one of their own sex.” (Ibid, Part, III, Ch. IV, p 147) She has expressed quite high opinions about men. She esteems men by saying that

"I mean I have not felt about them as most women are taught to feel—to be on their guard against attack on their virtue, for no average man—no man
shout of a sensual savage — will molest a woman by day or night at home or abroad, unless she invites him. Until she says by a look 'Come on he is always afraid to, and if you never say it, or look it, he never comes'' (Ibid, Part, III, Ch. IV, p 147) Sue's such remark shows her quite matured and sensible woman. No doubt she may be wrong at one or two occasions but her assumption cannot be rejected completely. She has tried to put the fact before the people. She does not abuse men blindly rather she esteems them. Her decision of shifting from Phillotson to Jude in the beginning is only because of the attitudes of a 'husband.'

Sue is an honest girl; she does not hide anything neither from Phillotson nor from Jude. She frankly explains everything about her friend to Phillotson. Her friend's death causes a terrible remorse in Sue as she takes it as her cruelty for rejecting his offer to be his mistress, though she knew that he died of consumption and not her entirely. In this connection she goes down to Sandbourne to his funeral, and is his only mourner. She candidly admits about the little money left by him —because she has broken his heart, (she thinks so.) She even praises him in the following word. "That's been men are so much better than women." (Ibid, Part III)
Ch. IV, p.148) She also declares that she has invested his money in a bubble scheme but has lost it. She is altogether aware of herself psychologically because when Jude appreciates her by saying that ‘Sue, I believe you are as innocent as you are unconventional! She replies him that ---- “I am not particularly innocent, as you see.” She continues “But I have never yielded myself to any lover if that’s what you mean! I have remained as I began.” (Ibid, Part III, Ch. IV, p. 149)

So far as Sue’s relations with Phillotson are concerned she is not malevolent to him. On the other hand she also praises him for his approach to her. She explains to Jude that he is as good to her as a man can be and he gives her perfect liberty- which elderly husbands don’t do in general. She is so clever that she makes it quite clear to Jude that the reason of her unhappiness is not her husband’s old age, she makes it clear to Jude :-

“If you think I am not happy because he’s too old for me, you are wrong” (Ibid, p.189) In short physical passions are least important for her. It is even supported by her behaviour with Jude because initially she does not want to keep sexual relations with him. It is only because of Jude’s insistence and her jealousy about Arabella that she surrenders herself to Jude. She explains Jude the real meaning
of the relation between husband and wife. Her this comment clearly proves her to be a woman of social and psychological sentience, she explains to Jude — "Some women's love of being loved is insatiable and so often, is their love of loving and in the last case they may find that they can't give it continuously to the chamber-officer appointed by the bishop's license to receive it. But you are so straightforward, Jude, that you can't understand me! .......Now you must go, I am sorry my husband is not at home." (Ibid, Part, IV, Ch.I,p..203) She cannot be called the woman of infidelity during her stay with her husband.

Sue believes in the marriage institution as a sacred thing. She is unable to receive that love from her husband which she expects, that is why she is unwilling to live with him. She expects that, apart from the physical relations, marriage has some other sanctity which should be observed by any couple. She also suggests that there should be transparency in the relations of husband and wife. Thomas Hardy highlighted this relation and outlined the sensibility of his women characters like Sue. Her such sense of awareness is conspicuous when she explains Jude the result of her discomfort with Mr. Phillotson that——

"I wish he would beat me, or be faithless to me, or do some open thing that I could talk about as a justification for feeling as I do! But he (Phillotson) does
nothing, except that he has grown a little cold since he has found out how I feel" (Ibid, Part IV, Ch. II, p. 211) While explaining this she is much careful about her vitality and repeatedly warns Jude to keep himself away from her. Briefly, she realizes the fact that it is wrong on the part of any married woman to surrender herself physically to any stranger. She makes utmost efforts to retain her chastity which are ceased by the circumstances she faces.

It is not impossible for Sue to go to Jude whenever she wishes but she does take it dishonest on her part to go without seeking Phillotson's permission. She asks for her husband's consent by writing him letter continuously. In her letter she also mentions that in his view her tastes are hopelessly low but she does not insist him to allow her to go. When she does not get any response from Phillotson she compromises by writing that she should be allowed to live in his house in a separate way. She writes him again where she candidly admits that - "Be kind to me - even though I have not been kind to you! I will go away, go abroad, anywhere, and never trouble you." (Ibid, Part IV, Ch. III, p. 223) She is alive to her own behaviour with her husband and so requests him to be allowed to go away from him. Sue's social awareness can
well be observed at the time of her receiving the note about the illness of Phillotson. Sue visits him without any hesitation and giving hoot to Jude. Being sensible about her act she explains Phillotson that — "I have no business here but I heard you were ill - very ill, and - and as I know that you recognize other feeling between man and woman than physical love, I have come." (Ibid, Part IV, Ch. VI, p.248) Sue's this comment rightly points out her broad outlook towards life.

Though she is a new woman, she is no heartless or relentless, as she possesses the vital social manners. A man after having deserted his wife would never think to go to visit her on being heard about her illness not even after learning about her death. It is possible only to a woman who can think to go to visit her husband just after her knowledge about her husband's illness despite the disharmony in their relations. Naturally Sue possesses this quality and pays visit to Phillotson. Sue explains like a sensible person that only severe illness would not have justified her coming to him. She expresses her joy when she comes to know that Phillotson is better and is not caught in severe problem. After the death of Jude's aunt it is Sue who decides to go with him for
his Aunt’s funeral thinking it so sad to let him attend the funeral alone.

Sue is proved as a distinguished woman having warmth about human being when she is ready to accept the son of Jude and Arabella. She herself suggests Jude that they must have him. She even promises Jude that she would do the best she could to be a mother to him. She assures him of their ability to afford to keep the child and promises to work hard for the child’s sake. Besides she eagerly waits for him and says “I wonder when he’ll arrive?” (Ibid, Part V. Ch. III, p.271) Despite her jealousy about Arabella which tends her to decide to marry and surrender physically to Jude, Sue generously accepts their child thinking about the future of an orphan boy. She thinks to adopt the child even though he is not of Arabella and Jude. Her suggestion to Jude about the child proves her to be a loving woman. She says “I feel that anyhow, I don’t like to leave the unfortunate little fellow to neglect. Just think of his life in a Lambeth pothouse, and all its evil influences, with a parent who doesn’t want him and has indeed hardly seen him, and a step father who doesn’t know him” (Ibid, Part V. Ch. III, p.271) She even becomes emotional about the child when she comes to know the tragic plight about
him because she says "The poor child seems to be wanted by nobody!" (Ibid, p. 270) She not only accepts the child but loves too much equally to him. She tenderly loves the child by saying that "You may call me mother if you wish to my poor dear, bending her cheek against his to hide her tears." (Ibid, p.275) She persistently assures Jude that she wanted to be kind to the child, and to be a mother to him, and their adding the legal form to their marriage might make it easier for her.

Sue's sensibility can also be appreciated on the occasion of the problem of their residence when she is prohibited to continue her stay in the house on the ground of their illegal relationship. Since they are not legally married, they are declined to live in the room for a week. After listening the landlady's remark Sue becomes ready to leave the room though she is entitled to the lodging for a week. It is only because Sue does not wish to create a disturbance between the wife and husband i.e. the landlord and the landlady. On the contrary, she is ready to leave as requested. She even does not let Jude know about the problem of their residence and in the company of the boy shewanders in to this street and that and tries for a dozen houses. Her remorse of telling
the child about their plight after the death of the children also shows her a woman of deep understanding. She justifies her act by saying that she wanted to be truthful. She does not like to deceive the child to the facts of life. Eventually she accepts her fault when she says that —"Yet I wasn't truthful for which a false delicacy I told him too obscurely —Why was I half -wiser than my fellow women? And not entirely wiser! Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths instead of half realities? It was my want of self control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them! " (Ibid, Part VI, Ch.II p.333) She has a great feeling of compunction for her wrong doing.

Sue's significant awareness can well be judged at the end of the novel when she has to lose her sons. She contemplates her acts and finally decides to go back to Phillotson due to her realization that they have committed some mistakes of avoiding religious ceremony of marriage. She convinces Jude in the following words—"Of course we were afraid of the ceremony, and a good many others would have been in our places, with such strong reasons for fears. But experience has proved how we misjudged ourselves and overrated our infirmities and if you are beginning to respect rites and ceremonies as you seem to be I wonder you don't' say it shall be carried out instantly ?" (Ibid, Part. VI, Ch. III, p.341) She accepts the deaths of her children in the form of
punishment of her act. She accepts her fault due to the death of her children. It is only because of her awareness that she wants to avoid the future calamities which her children or her family will have to face. That is why she remarks with courage and understanding that—"My children ---are dead---and it is right that they should be! I am glad – almost. They were sin-begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live! Their death was the first stage of my purification. That's why they have not died in vain."(Ibid, Part VI, Ch. V, p.358)

This shows that the heroines of Thomas Hardy are quite sensible and conscious about the critical conditions of life. They know well to cope with the situations. They think the matter seriously and deal with it cleverly. They know to set back when it is good either for themselves or for others. They commit mistakes but soon they express their rue about it and try to mend it. In short they are very well aware of the matters on social and psychological level.
References,


4) Hardy Thomas, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Macmillan India Ltd. 1974
