CHAPTER-V

THE FEELING OF LOVE AND BOLDNESS IN HARDY'S WOMEN CHARACTERS
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Thomas Hardy skillfully portrayed his women characters with different attributes. On the one hand he revealed their conventional life being suppressed by the patriarchal society, and on the other hand he showed some of them unconventional fighting for their rights and existence. His unconventional women can be called rebellious, which is defined as ‘New Women’ in the modern sense of the term. Despite, they are not devoid of the fundamental features of a woman. They cannot be taken subordinate by any of their characteristic by the male dominated world. Hardy’s women are the quintessence of human being. They are having the true feeling of love and boldness in them. No doubt some of them shift their love but it is due to their unconventional nature. They are not vamps. The thorough study of Hardy’s novel proves that men are the snakes in the grass many times in the matter of love and women have always tried to be true to their husbands though they are persuaded late in the novel whoever
they love, their love is true. Their love is not deceptive like Michael Henchard, Donald Farfrae, Sergeant Troy, Angel Clare or Wildeve. Hardy’s heroines cannot be condemned even on the ground of infidelity. It has always been a common belief among the male class that women are always betrayal in love. John Donne in his poem ‘Go and catch a falling Star’ claims that it is impossible to find true and beautiful woman on the earth. It means that women are considered to be traitors in the matter of love. But it can be seen that Hardy’s heroines are quite loyal in their love. Even in Greek mythology the women like Helen and Aphrodite are condemned for their deceptive nature that is why W.B.Yeats, in his poem ‘A Prayer for my Daughter’ does not expect his daughter like both of the above characters in the Greek mythology. Hardy’s women have different attitudes towards love. Faithful and devoted love is represented by Tess and Elizabeth, selfish and passionate love is symbolized by Eustacia, Lucetta and Arabella. The love of Bathsheba is set at a low temperature. Sue’s love which is entirely devoid of physical desire is of spiritual quality. But the women like Susan Henchard, Elizabeth Jane, Bathsheba Everdene, Tess, and Thomasin are quite staunch to their husbands. Their love
feeling is quite strong either to their lovers or husbands. So it can be said that it is the man who is erratic and not the woman. Each of these lovers has a great desire to possess the woman so he loves ardently. But once he possesses her, he begins to lose his interest in her and starts loving another woman.

Susan is the faithful woman in *The Mayor of the Casterbridge*. She is plain hearted and home spun wife. When she is auctioned by her husband she brings into the notice of her husband about his wrong doing, and after being noticed that he does not listen to her she goes away with Newson thinking that it is her duty to be loyal to her purchaser. That is why she seizes that sailor's arm with her right hand and mounts the little girl on her left and goes out of the tent sobbing bitterly. Elizabeth Jane in the same novel loves Farfrae ardently and patiently. She is more devoted to him than he. She is not disturbed by the marriage of Farfrae with Lucetta, a more attractive woman than her. She does not become indignant rather she copes with the situation patiently. Her love is not based on physical attraction. Elizabeth Jane is anxious always about her lover's welfare. It is because, no sooner does she understands Henchard's planning to hurt Farfrae, than
she alerts him against Henchard. In short her love knows no ill-will or jealousy. She remains firm on her love and therefore gets reward of her loyalty in the end of the novel. Lucetta in the same novel is quite fearful about the revelation of her love affair with Michael Henchard after being married to Farfrae. She is so worried that it affects her marital life. She does not want to let her down in the eyes of Farfrae, her husband, due to her previous relations with Henchard. She has loved Henchard before she marries Farfrae. But when Henchard threatens to give the same love letters to Farfrae, she is disturbed. On being promised by Henchard to return the letters, she is relieved. She is returned the letters and she is happy that all her dark past would be burnt along with the letters. But Hardy's heroines are always the prey of fate and so is Lucetta. Henchard gives the letters to the most devilish man, Joshua Jopp, who reads the letters and arranges skimmity ride. After watching her own effigy in the skimmity ride Lucetta is shocked and finally dies unfortunately. Her death due to the shock after the skimmity ride shows that she is not a flirt. After her marriage she wanted to be happy in her life without letting her past to peep into her present and future.
Bathsheba Everdene in *Far From the Madding Crowd* is quite conscious of the sinfulness of the body and her commitment in her married life with Troy though it is in deplorable condition. After learning her husband’s (Troy’s) illicit relations with Fanny, she does not stoop to any repugnance, but she becomes jealous for her love to him. She passionately tells him:

"I love you better than she did: kiss me too Frank - kiss me! You will, Frank, kiss me too! "*(Far. fr. The .Mad. Crd. Ch.43 p.672)* Bathsheba is deeply hurt, when one day, she discovers, that Troy still keeps a curl of Fanny’s beautiful ‘yellow’ hair in his watch. She does not forsake him though their marriage seems to be on the verge of breakdown. Her advice to Liddy is significant in this context: “If ever you marry, you’ll find yourself in a fearful situation, but mind this, don’t you flinch. Stand your guard and be cut to piece. That is what I am going to do” *(Ibid, Ch.44, p.676)* As Santosh Chakrabarti writes “when she gives a promise to Boldwood due to his pressure and importunities, it is out of a sense of her moral obligation to save him from a possible insanity that she does so: the thought of sinning in body by a second marriage does not prick her so. When ultimately she marries Oak, she is actuated by a recuperative
commitment to a partnership in working life and by a feeling of love which is based not on sensuality or pride but on mutual understanding and faith. The question of profanity or defilement of the body does not arise in such union.” (Chakrabarti, p.127)

Gabriel accompanies her up the hill, explaining to her details of his forthcoming tenure of the other farm, they speak very little of their mutual feelings, pretty phrases and warm expressions. Hardy wrote about their love:-

"Their was the substantial affection which arises (if any arise at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality ---- the compounded feeling proves itself to be the only love which is strong as death ------that love which many waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown, beside which the passion usually called by the name is evanescent as steam.(Fa. Fr. the Mad.Crd.Ch.56, p.732)

Even Fanny is also loyal to Troy and dies at the end. Her loyalty has been described by Troy himself when he speaks to Bathsheba, "This woman is more to me dead as she is, than ever you were, or are, or can be. If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours and those cursed coquetries, I should have married her. I never had another
thought till you came in my way." (Ibid, Ch.43, p.672) As soon as Bathsheba hears his reply she gives a long, low cry of measureless despair and indignation, such a wail of anguish as had never before been heard within those old inhabited walls. This shows her deep love for the man like Troy.

Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is also filled with deep love for Angel Clare. Tess yields to his embrace with unreflecting inevitableness. Having seen that it was really her lover who had advanced, and no one else, her lips part and she sinks upon him in her momentary joy with something very like and ecstatic cry. She falls in love with Angel Clare but as she thinks that she is no longer *'a pure woman'* she hesitates to marry him, even though she is pressed by her ardent lover to become his wife. She suffers agonies with her passionate love for Clare and in her awkward predicament she cries out to him: "Why didn't you stay and love me when I was - was sixteen, living with my little sisters and brothers, and you danced on the green? O why didn't you, why didn't you. (T.D.p.230) Tess, the heroine of the novel is deeply devoted to her husband, Angel Clare and loves him truly and passionately. Hardy points out:
"There was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Clare. To her sublime trustfulness he was all that goodness could be. Tess' room-mate Izz, who also loves Clare, tells him that "nobody could love thee more than Tess did!..... She would have laid down her life for thee." (Ibid, p.195) Even Tess stabs Alec when he speaks ill of her husband because she cannot endure an insult of her husband. After committing the murder of Alec she comes to Angel and tells him that "I have done it,-I don't know, still I owed it to you. I never love him, at all, Angel, as I loved you......., My heart could not bear it. He had nagged me about you before." (Ibid, p. 271) Indeed, she loves Angel so deeply, that she rather prefers to die than to live and to be despised by him. She ardently loves Angel and expects the reciprocal love from him. After her confession to Angel about her gloomy past his dramatic response to her confession shocks her. She says: 'I thought, Angel, that you loved me -me, my very self? It is I you do love, o how can it be that you look and speak so? It frightens me! Having begun to love you I love you for ever -----in all changes, in all disgraces, because you are yourself. I ask no more. Then how can you, o my husband, stop loving me? Stop loving me? (Ibid, p. 264-65)

For Eustacia Vye, 'the heroine of the 'The Return of the Native', 'love is the one cordial which could drive away the eating...
loneliness of her days." (The Ret. of the Nat. p. 66) "As she has to live in the gloomy and oppressive atmosphere of Egdon Heath which she loathes, she desires love 'as one in a desert would be thankful for brakish water'. "Love for him (Hardy) was the quintessence, says Evelyn Hardy 'the elixir of life.' Love alone promises to satisfy the thirst of Hardy's men and women for happiness and harmony in the dark and tragic world of his novels." (Tyagi, p.47)

Eustacia "lives to love, and to love in a hot blind lustful way not necessarily an animal way. (Duffin, p.17) As Pratibha Tyagi writes, "Eustacia seems to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover. She is incapable of cool and deliberate thinking. She is all fire and passion as if her flesh glorious and exultant has absorbed her soul, and has blood - red passion of its own. She does not wish for simple kind and faithful love. She feels that "a blaze of love, and extinction, was better than a lantern glimmer of the same which should last long years." She desires Wildeve as long as there is no better man. But when Clym appears upon the scene and wishes her 'good night' in the dark, she is charmed by him at once, as if she had
predetermined to nourish a passion for him. She loves Clym passionately and tells him

"I see your face in every scene of my dreams and hear your voice in every sound I wish I did not. It is too much what I feel. They say such love never lasts." (Qtd. Tyagi, p.85)

Eustacia, as Hardy pointed out had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. (The Ret. of the Nat.p.63) As she loves passionately, she wishes for intense passion in return." Don’t you offer me tame love” She once tells Wildeve, “or away you go.” What makes Clym desirable to Eustacia is his identification with Paris, but undoubtedly her heart too is engaged this time. Hence she confesses to Clym that “to be your wife and live in Paris would be heaven for me but I would rather live with you in a hermitage here than not be yours at all” (Ibid, p. 200).

In the same novel another woman is Thomasin; she is quite faithful to her husband. Thomasin remains attached to her husband, Wildeve under all circumstances. She admires Diggory Venn’s passionate devotion to her but she does not marry him nor does she accept her aunt’s suggestion to marry Clym. On the
tells her aunt, “nothing can alter that.” (Ibid, p.112) And when her aunt speaks ill of Wildeve and informs her that he visits another woman she says:

“Mr. Wildeve is not a profligate man, any more than I am an improper woman. He has an unfortunate manner and doesn’t try to make people like him if they don’t wish to do it of their own accord.” (Ibid, p.112)

Thomasin knows that, Wildeve still loves Eustacia and goes to see her very often, but her fidelity to her husband keeps her mouth shut. At Clym’s suggestion that she should accompany her husband, when he goes for a walk, she remarks ------

“O, I don’t care for going anywhere, besides, there is baby.” (Ibid, p.350)

She enquires her husband, Wildeve about his coming late at home as she cares for him much so she asks him, --

“Damon, where have you been? I was getting quite frightened, and thought you had fallen into the river. I dislike being in the house by myself”; (Ibid, p.351) She does not think money more valuable than her husband. When Wildeve misunderstands her feelings and suggests her about his planning of leaving their place of living and going to some other good house, she persuades him by saying that:
“No- I don’t mind waiting - I would rather stay here twelve months longer than run any risk with baby. But I don’t like your vanishing so in the evening.” (Ibid, p.351)

Even Sue Bridehead in ‘Jude the Obscure’ is certainly the most spiritual of all these women. She does not have any animal passion in her love. In her the “spirit governs, leaving flesh to play a purely ancillary part.” (Duffin, p.226) She marries Phillotson without ever considering the physical quality of marriage. Sue loves Jude very deeply and lives with him as his wife. Despite this fact, she does not give herself completely to him. In the same novel Arabella loves Jude passionately. To see her love Jude remarks that ‘It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson, ay, or a pope!’ (J.the Ob.p.52) She is deeply in love with him and wants to have him at any cost. She says “I want him to have me”, to marry me, I must have him. I can’t do without him. He’s the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can’t give myself to him altogether.” (Ibid, p.54) They enjoy their loving relationship just for two months in delirium of love. Unfortunately there is a break in their relation, as Jude understands, that Arabella is not able to fulfill his intellectual and spiritual aspirations. He thinks her to be less capable as a specimen of womankind. Arabella is, however, determined to keep him and
therefore she deceives him by saying that she is pregnant. Arabella is the most passionate woman in Hardy's novels.

Besides their loving nature, Hardy's heroines are quite bold to deal with the situations they come across. Despite their femininity, their courage is always noteworthy. At many times they equal to men in their courage and adventure. Hardy showed clearly in his novels that even on the ground of daring and valour, women have proved their nerve (audacity) at many times. The biological difference, though, indicates women weak but mentally they are many times stronger than men. But this world of patriarchy seldom heeds to their fortitude. On the contrary their gallantry is criticized by this male dominated world.

Elizabeth Jane in 'The Mayor of the Casterbridge' behaves boldly when she comes to Casterbridge along with her mother to meet Henchard. It is Susan who hesitates to see Henchard as a mayor of Casterbridge though she is his wife. But Elizabeth, quite unknown about their relations dares to see him on behalf of her mother. She boldly goes to Henchard and conveys him about the arrival of Susan in his town. When Henchard and Elizabeth are together and he is indifferent to her, she soon takes the decision to...
leave him and lives away from him with the woman like Lucetta. Even when Henchard forces Lucetta to give him a promise to marry him, Elizabeth Jane again courageously intervenes the situation and suggests Henchard that he should not compel her to do anything against her will. She also deters him by saying that as she has lived with her, she knows better about her endurance. Elizabeth's intrepidity is seen, when she is deserted by Donald Farfrae. She is not slightly disturbed by the treatment, she receives from him. She confronts the situation sensibly by accepting the superiority of Lucetta's beauty to her.

Bathsheba Everdene in *Far From the Madding Crowd* is also a girl of bold nature. Though woman, she deals with all her male servant 'skillfully'. Gabriel Oak is quite astonished by her self-confidence in her talk dealing with the people. In the corn market, at Casterbridge, on the market day, when the large hall is filled with farmers for buying and selling their corn, Bathsheba with an air of self confidence shows her sample of grain in quite professional manner. While discussing about the business, she sticks to her own prices and tries to reduce the prices of others. She impresses all the farmers in the hall. Bathsheba, like a professional
administrator, governs her workers adroitly. She does not even spare Gabriel Oak, to whom she believes in more than the other workers. When she intervenes in her personal matter, she instantly gives him a notice and asks him to leave her job at the end of the week. At one of the incident when Bathsheba makes the round of her farm at night, she hears the sound of footsteps in the thick plants but she does not recede. On the contrary she marches ahead where she comes across the man namely Sergeant Troy. Being a valiant woman Bathsheba keeps interest in the sword play and goes alone with Sergeant Troy to see his skill in the same. The place where she has to go, is the hill opposite her house, a mile away, into an uncultivated track of land, where grow many thickly bushes together. It is in a hollow, amid the trees, ferns and Bathsheba agrees to meet Sergeant Troy at eight in the evening in order to see his sword exercise. While watching this sword exercise her boldness is at trial as Troy flourishes the weapon in such a way that the point and blade of the sword darts towards her left side, then re-appears on her right side and emerges as it were from between her ribs, having apparently passed through her body until he shows her the sword perfectly clean and free
from blood and is not touched by her body. Everything happens quite quick and she remains still. Even with remarkable quickness of movement, Troy clips a loose lock of hair from Bathsheba’s head with his sword, lifts the caterpillar from the bosom of her without touching her bosom. But Bathsheba stays unmoved facing all this adventure courageously.

After being killed by Boldwood, Troy’s body is taken by Bathsheba to her own house without caring for the law and the legal formalities. She even undresses Troy’s dead body and wraps him up in grave clothes. The surgeon says about her: "The body has been undressed and properly laid out in grave clothes Gracious Heaven -this mere girl! She must have the nerve of a stoic." (Far.Fr.Mad.Crd.p.723) She lives with the dead body of Fanny for whole night in her own house. Bathsheba is praiseworthy for her tremendous self confidence and for her practical sense that she shows, when the responsibility of the farm comes on her shoulder. Gabriel Oak is quite surprised to see her skill and courage shown by her for the development of her business, despite the lack of experience in this matter. Even Hardy remarked that some women only require an opportunity to bring out their hidden qualities. When she catches
Pennyways stealing the flies at him like a cat and dismisses him on the spot thus showing a manly courage and promptness of decision. After the dismissal of the bailiff she herself takes charge of the farm. She tells her workmen that she has formed a resolution to have no bailiff, but to manage everything with her own head and hands. She gives them a warning: "Don't any unfair ones among you suppose that because I am a woman I don't understand the difference between bad goings on and good. I shall be up before you are awake, I shall be a field before you are up and I shall have breakfasted before you are afield." (Ibid, p. 540)

She personally supervises such operations as sheep-washing, sheep-shearing, harvesting, hay-making, etc. She knows the art of hiving the bees. She personally attends to the safety of her corn ricks. At the time of the fire in the midnight, she personally arrives at the spot. When heavy rain is expected; she herself goes to see to the safety of the ricks while her husband is lying drunk. She saves the life of Oak, when he lays in his hut unconscious by sprinkling water on his face and neck and unbuttoning his collar, regardless of the further consequences. Oak is also surprised to see Bathsheba's masculine manner, when he watches her stretching her limb and their being...
original position with some quickness, putting her legs astride the horse just like a man.

Wittenberg writes about Bathsheba that “Bathsheba soon progresses from emotional and intellectual control to economic control, when her uncle leaves her his farm in recognition of her capabilities. The ‘unpracticed girl’ develops into a ‘supervising and cool woman’. When we see her framed in her bedroom window in a visual moment typical of Hardy’s heroines, the scene has a crucial difference, because she is there giving orders to her male employees. When she makes the speech announcing her decision to be her own bailiff, thus augmenting her already considerable responsibility, she performs with great confidence, vowing to “do my best” and to “astonish you all”. Women farmers were not unknown in Hardy’s day, there were quite a few in the Dorset area, most of them widows- but they were certainly uncommon in fiction. *(Wittenberg, p. 66)*

At one point Bathsheba expresses her admiration for the Goddess Diana and even in times of great difficulty she exhibits strength and resolution that could identify her with that mythological figure, as in the moments when she staunchly helps
Oak in his battle to save the hayricks from the thunderstorm. By the end of the novel, she grows in moral stature and is rewarded, not only with what promises to be a serene and comradely marriage but also with tributes from those crotchety male voices the rustics and the narrator. The former praise her bravery and honesty and the latter in a memorable back handed compliment calls her “the stuff of which great men’s mothers’ are made. (Ibid, p.71)

Tess in “Tess of the D'Urbervilles” is equally bold by nature. She deals with every situation courageously and tries to overcome it. She does not lose her head, when she confronts the incidence of her rape by Alec. She feels sorry, but does not think to end her life as other women generally do. Her giving birth to a child and to baptize it and finally to bury it in the churchyard shows her intrepid nature. Tess' courage can be observed at the time, when she murders Alec, due to her mental and physical exploitation by him. She is not stunned, when she sees police around her. On the contrary she says, “It is as it should be, Angel, I am almost glad yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted.” (T.D.p.278) She accepts her fate quite undauntedly. She shows no sign of fear; she does not scream
or shriek; she does not become hysterical like other women. She quietly says: "I am ready" when she is about to be taken into custody by the policeman.

Eustacia Vye, in 'The Return of the Native', is a valiant woman who possesses ample courage to cope with the circumstances, she faces in her life. Eustacia is introduced to us in the novel as a tall and straight in build and being alone at night near the bonfire, taking a telescope in her hand and looking in the directions of the Quiet Woman Inn. She is quite determined and firm on her opinions. She does not like to compromise with her principles that is why she leaves Clym Yeobright, as she thinks him unfit for her designs. Eustacia exhibits her sense of daring at the time of rehearsal of the play to be performed at the house of Mrs. Yeobright as a part of Christmas celebrations. Her disguise as a boy, and taking his place in the performance of the play by offering him five shillings, and when he is not convinced by this offer her readiness to let him kiss her hand for a quarter of an hour, is really an act of fearlessness. She is even successful in her effort. Eustacia's passions, says Hardy, are of the massive, rather than the vivacious kind. Nor does she feel afraid of the
consequences even if her identity becomes known during the performance of the play.

Sue Bridehead in 'Jude the Obscure' is a woman of sheer adventure and indispensable boldness. She shows the courage which is quite inconceivable about any other women. She challenges the system of the society. She advocates the live-in relationship in the period when marriage was taken as an important part of life. She calls herself as an Ishmaelite. (J. the Ob. p. 139) She is ready to spend a night out of her hostel in Jude's company, where such an action is bound to be misunderstood by others. She does not care for rules and regulations of the hostel. She is not ashamed of the male cloth which she puts on. She does not even care for the religious rites. Her behaviour is Voltairean. Sue's daring and boldness can be seen in her going with Jude for a sight-seeing excursion, when she spends a night with him in the countryside at a shepherd's cottage. Confined to a solitary room as her punishment for having spent the night outside the hostel, she jumps out of the window and wading through water, goes to Jude and stays there for a night. As she gets wet, she takes off her own clothes and puts on Jude's, without feeling much embarrassed.
The above characteristics show that Hardy wanted to depict the women as versatile and adept in all walks of life and cannot be looked down on the ground of their sex.
References


