Chapter-IX

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In Jude the Obscure (1895), Hardy begins to inspect the marital unhappiness and sexual incompatibility which social convention refused to acknowledge and admit. The institution of marriage is attacked in Jude and the Obscure as it is seen to be the cause of much suffering and misery.

Jude the Obscure is mainly about the shattered ideals if its two major characters – Jude Farley and Sue Bridgehead who defied the stiff Victorian moral codes regarding the conventional marriage law. In contrast to their beliefs, their attempts ended in terrible disaster not only for themselves but also for all those who were closely related to them. The agonizing experience which the entire members of the family underwent, made Judge Farley and Sue Bridgehead see the bitter reality. They bitterly regretted the futility of fighting against the strictly laid marriage laws bringing social equality and discipline. Hardy used the oppressive marriage law as the tragic machinery of the novel to project its disaster negative impact on the social life portrayed at that time.
The tragic poet never loses sight of the fact that there is something in the nature of things that is working for man's overthrow.¹

Jude Farley is portrayed as an obscure and weak willed character which can be ascribed to his broken family, back-ground. His mother had drowned herself and father had a natural death. In addition to these traumatic experiences, there was his great aunt who openly expressed her unwillingness to take charge of his upbringing. The loneliness and helplessness had deeply affected Jude from early childhood and continued throughout his life till the very end. As a teenager, Jude wanted to learn Latin and Greek but changes to studying Gospels as they had a special appeal to him them. His ambition was to become a bishop by leading a pure and wise Christian life and to set an example by giving away a major part of his earnings in charity.

This very fact of overthrow is also admitted by the present writer with Hardy's conception of a malevolent Fate. Spivey goes on to quote Miss Hamilton by saying that the essential element of tragedy is not the hero of an exalted social rank but a soul that can feel greatly.²
Jude's encounter with Arabella Donne at the age of nineteen changes all his plans. He came under the spell of her physical charms. They were married in hurry and within a short time, the marriage broke off. Jude realized that their lives were ruined by the matrimonial union which is based on a temporary sexual feelings without any compatibility of their two different natures. Loneliness and despair led Jude to think of his interest in books once again and he made a move towards Christ minister, the city of knowledge. Again, Jude was distracted by his cousin Sue Bridgehead at Christ minister. But his marital bond with Arabella stopped him from revealing his strong passion for sue.

Jude's acquaintance with Sue Bridgehead resulted in total failure of his ambitious. All his hopes of entering a university collapsed with the loss of the chance of being an ordained minister. Jude experienced defeat in love to, as Sue Bridgehead decided to marry Mr. Robert Phillotson, the schoolmaster for whom she worked. But neither Jude nor Sue gave up their love for Mr. Phillotson lost his profession of letting Sue live with Jude. Jude and Sue along with their children were treated as social outcasts. No job was made available to them. They were even deprived of community lodgings.
This point is also agreed; the author agrees with him there too when he tells us about the "nobility of passion". The point of difference arises when he tells us that... real tragedy reaffirms life. 3

In Jude the Obscure Jude conforms a world which he sees indifferent to his goals. Focus on Jude's character goes on with the subject Hardy intended – the story of a young man who could not go to Oxford, his struggles and ultimate failure. In correspondence with Edmund Gosse, Hardy admits his subjects has taken multi - dimensions. His novel is concerned with the "labours of a poor student to get a University degree, and secondly with the tragic issues to get a University degree, and secondly with the tragic issues of two bad marriages" (1962: 271).

"To get excitement and shake of depression", she said in low tones. What depressed you? Life. 4

The novel also revolves around Sue Bridgehead whose role is to project Hardy's views of marriage and unmask the deep-seated conventions which baffle Jude's hopes. Dale Kramer identifies Sue as the cause of the tragedy: "It can justly be said, Jude's choice of Sue is what dooms him" (1975:161). Yet, Sue's
portrait is Hardy's representation of what a woman should be a woman who can decide for herself and determine her course of life but unfortunately crushed by the excessive weight of religious and social forces.

To understand Sue's character properly, it is necessary to study her relationship with various characters in the novel. Hardy speaks of Sue as "a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me" (1962 : 272). Here, Hardy refers to her intellectuality and independence of thought and emotion. Like Meredith, Gissing and Moore, Hardy was deeply interested in the 'new women' who wanted to find as identity for herself. A German reviewer remarked to Hardy: "Sue Bridgehead, the heroine, was the first description in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year – the woman of the feminist movement – the slight pale bachelor girl – the intellectualized emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet, who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession, and boasts themselves as superior people because they are licensed to be loved on the premises".
And what makes it worse with me is, that you are not my real mother, and you needn’t have me unless you liked. I oughtn’t to have come to ‘ee-that’s the real truth? I troubled me in Australia and I trouble folk here. I wish I had not been born.\(^5\)

Sue is emancipated in the sense that she lives away from her family. Works seriously and thinks brilliantly. Beneath Sue’s rejection of conventions and tradition lurks a great human potential to resist the loss of identity that traditional love demands and even dictates. She shows great strength in the face of formidable pressures from Jude and Phillotson. She wants to make a life for herself without depending on any man but herself. Even after she joins Jude, she keeps her independence in whatever she did.

Elfride too, seeing a staying as the day breaks, express her wish to die: “That’s how I should like to die”.\(^6\)

Sue’s statements on the institutions of marriage are rational and illuminating Hardy has made Sue the mouthpiece of his own feelings and opinions. She sees marriage as the most despotic kind of restriction of her freedom. She wants a relationship as close but independent as two stars revolving around each other. Hardy questions if a woman had any right to choose her husband
and this is revealed through Sue’s lamentation to Jude. “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 a she-goat, or any other domestic animal”.

Hardy advocates that women should have the right to exercise their will in choosing their life partners and also in expressing their feelings. Sue’s fear of marriage was only due to its coercive nature as it licensed love. Marriage as a hopelessly vulgar institution echoed by Sue frequently, showed her repugnance of being limited and restricted. Elizabeth Langland adds further. “Her feelings about marriage and sex derive form a sense of her individuality and independence, which seem to her threatened by sexual or formal commitments. She seem to her threatened by sexual or formal commitments. She wants an identity of her own. She does not see marriage as her ultimate goal in life. She is fearful of submerging her identity in that of another or worse, of becoming a kind of chattel!” (1980: 20).

To an Unborn Pauper Child also puts forward Hardy recommendation of not coming to life as it is full of misery, here people grown, “faith waste away”.
Hardy never created such an appealing character like Sue Bridgehead, which searched for her own identity, so different from the conventional women. In looking for such an identity, she demanded something which men had never taken notice of and which passive women had never before questioned. Such identity can be achieved through work and financial help.

An Unborn Pauper Child also puts forward Hardy recommendation of not coming to life as it is full of misery, here people grown, "Hopes Dwindle".8

Sue Bridgehead makes a contrast to Arabella Donne. Arabella always wanted somebody to rely on and this is the reason why she wanted to hook Jude. Jude was trapped by Arabella’s pretended pregnancy during their courtship. When the marriage ceremony was over, she told him: "Don’t take on, dear; what’s done can’t be undone".

Arabella never had an ambition or a vision of what she should be. She conformed externally to the conventions of her time just to manipulate those conventions to her own advantage. Deep in her heart, Arabella cared little for the sanctity of marriage. She was restless and never satisfied for long and
lived a licentious life. While Arabella is the earthy type of Goddess, with a coarse kind of beauty, Sue is a compound of feelings and ideas almost devoid of sexual urgency. Mary Wollstonecraft remarks, “Women, deluded by these sentiments, sometimes, boasts of their weakness, cunningly obtaining power by playing on the weakness of men; and they may well glory in their illicit says, for, like Turkish bashers, they have more real power than their masters; but virtue is sacrificed to temporary gratifications, and the respectability of life to the triumph of an hour” (1995 : 45).

Breathe not, hid heart: cease silently,
And though the birth hour betokens thee,
Sleep and long sleep:
The Doomsters heap.
Travails and tears around us here,
And Time - Wraiths turn our song singings to fear.⁹

The most dominant aspect of Sue’s character is her moral independence. She constantly resisted the need to conform to convention embodied in social and religious institutions. Only after the death of her children do her guilt feelings force her to submit to such institutions. It also makes her realize the futility
of fighting against the established moral norms. Hence, she decides to go back to Phillotson in order to set things right. Hardy presents Sue not as an arid case study but a living and breathing character inviting much sympathy. The outstanding difference between Sue and Arabella is that Arabella is ever willing to make concessions to the ways of the world and is insistent on gratifying her physical and social impulses. It was she who started the courtship with Jude an planned their marriage.

Yes, that's and are called to die.

Yes, that's the thing

In fall in spring,

The Yell ham says :-

Life offers - to deny.¹⁰

Another important point that Hardy stresses in the novel is that man is not entitled to force any woman, even his wife, to live with him. Hardy remarks 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”.

In one of her letters, George Sand says, "I want divorce established in marriage. Search as I may for the remedies to sore injustice, endless misery, and the incurable passions which trouble the union of the sexes, I can see no remedy but the power of breaking and reforming the marriage bond.

The question of defiance and acceptance is still the more important. By citing an example from Macbeth Spivey says that just as Macbeth’s "blow wind. Come Wreck" has the element of defiance."

Hardy makes this point clear through the characterization of Mr. Phillotson. Phillotson faced a strong disapproval of the authorities when he allowed Sue to live with Jude without the dissolution of their marriage. Arabella scolded Phillotson for letter Sue goes even though the law was on his side. She reminded him that the Church discriminated against women.

Come Wreck has the element of acceptance and they have tied me to a stake."

Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity. Men rough on us women; but we must grin and put up wait!
Even Dillingham, Phillotson’s close friend, advised him that he should tighten the reins by degrees only and he should not be too strenuous with Sue at first, as she should adjust through time. Hardy observed that women had no individuality and therefore no will to decide about their life. Therefore Hardy demonstrated that if women have to be liberated, men’s attitude towards them should change. Miriam Shinier says that according to Seneca fall’s declaration, “He allows her in Church, as well as Sate, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry (1996: 79).

What, Elizabeth? He cried, as he seized her hand. ‘What do you say? Mr. Henchard? Don’t, don’t scorage me like that.'

Sue’s psychological oppression and her inability to fight it. Add up the plight many women still find themselves in. women recognize and understand their emotional involvement in an exploitative system but that doesn’t mean that they can free themselves from emotional complicity in their own oppression. It is a major problem which faces the feminists that they can’t make adjustment between emotional security and independence of thought. Hardy’s grasp of this problem is one of the most far-sighted notions in Jude the Obscure.
"............but don't 'ee be as old as this. O my maid - I see you have another- a real father in my place. Then you know all; but don't give all you're thought to him. Do you save a little room for me".

In Jude the Obscure, Hardy admits the power of female sexuality Arabella won because she knew how to use her sexuality. She exploited people when they were most vulnerable. On the other hand, Sue and Jude who tried to establish a caring relationship out of wedlock were crushed and destroyed. What was ironic is that the moral conventions could accommodate Arabella but there was no place for the sexual and moral honesty of Sue and Jude. Therefore, Arabella's real counterpart in Hardy's fiction is not Sue bridgehead but in a small degree Tess Durbeyfield. Had Tess been more like Arabella, she would simply have seduced Angle Clare there and then making it impossible for him to leave her. Hardy describes Tess sexually as attractive as Arabella which makes Tess an easy victim for the amorous advance of the young Alec D'Urbervilles.

In Hardy's view, marriage is not merely a physical union but a union of ideas and tastes. Emotional and spiritual harmony between husband and wife should be the first consideration.
Where there is no love and spirituality, there is no marriage. A matrimony which is based on convention of material condition to sanctify it is the worst form of suffering in the world. In regard to Mill’s view of marriage, Mukherjee and Ramaswamy remark: “The relationship between a man and a woman should be based on mutual respect and mutual love giving due regard to one another’s rights. This would make them self – reliant to one another’s rights. This would make them self – reliant and self – sufficient. Unless the equal and just worthy of every human being is recognized they cannot enjoy equal rights nor realize their full potential (1995 : 41).

“I’ll never trouble ‘ee again, Elizabeth Jane-no, not to my dying day. Good-night. Good-Bye”  

Hardy also added that marriage is a social institution of paramount importance and therefore, it should be purged of all traces of cruelty, artificial faithfulness, and emotional frigidity which result from an ill matches union between man and woman. An easier divorce is a promise and hope for a healthier and happier life. Regarding Hardy’s views on marriage, Patricia Stubbs says, “As for the existing laws governing marriage, he called them the gratuitous cause of at least half the misery of
the community, and could only account for them as the product of a 'a barbaric age' of gross superstition (1979: 60).

Has the element of acceptance in it with "proud superiority", the present writer differs by saying that the acceptance is not due to "proud superiority" but due it hopelessness, knowing fully that there is no way out and if this type of acceptance is there, it is not tragic.\textsuperscript{16}

Hardy's first marriage to Emma Gifford was not a happy one and that justifies Hardy's criticism of the marriage contract which tied people permanently even though their tastes were different. Hardy's main objection was against the irrevocability of the marriage contract to emphasize the folly of a permanent union between ill - matched couple like Jude and Arabella. Hardy remarks ironically:

The two swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feel and desire precisely as they had believed, felt and desired during the few preceding weeks. What was as remarkable as the undertaking itself was the fact that nobody seemed at all surprised at what they swore.
"O why have you treated me so monstrously, Angel. I do not deserve it. I have thought it all over carefully, and I can never, never for give-you. You know that I did not intend to wrong you- why have you so wronged me? You are cruel, cruel indeed. I will try to forget you. It is all injustice I have received at you hands".17

Jude realizes his mistakes later, though it is too late to stop or withdraw, Jude feels that-

Their lives were ..... ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union; that of having based a permanent contract or a temporary feelings which has no necessary connection with affinities that alone reader a life–long comradeship tolerable.

......I do not deserve my lot. ‘She cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt’. O, the cruelty of putting me in to this ill-conceived world; I was capable of much; but I have 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.18
Hardy's concern about the social institution is revealed in most of his major novels but it is in Jude the Obscure, that it is more pronounced. If man has created these institutions, he can easily purge them of all ills. Hardy shows it through Sue's dialogue with Phillotson: "Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules produce comfort in others!" J. S. Mill comments: "Women cannot be expected to devote themselves to the emancipation of women, until men in considerable number are prepared to join with them in the undertaking" (1995: 99).

It is no use fighting against God.¹⁹

Due to her experience of marriage with Phillotson, Sue started seriously questioning whether marriage is a religious binding or a social contract. She was skeptical about religion as she saw marriage as a secular institution.

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.

And what I appear, a sick and poor man is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles - groping in the dark-acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I Am. 20

She was able to convince and persuade Phillotson to agree to their separation. Her brilliant arguments changed the conventional beliefs of Phillotson. He became so enlightened that he started championing the cause of separation while talking to his friend Dillingham. He even added that he did not see why the woman and her children should not be a family unit without the man. Phillotson’s decision to set Sue free was out of his kind – heartedness to free Sue as a person from a miserable and wretched contract which bound them together without any mutual understanding. Moreover, these were a vast age difference between the two.
Sue is devastatingly critical of the moral and religious orthodoxy, yet at the same time, she is emotionally bound by it. It ultimately destroys her when she is overwhelmed by the children's death. She embraces the moral dogma which she had renounced, providing her now an explanation for her sufferings. The same Christian concepts which she ridiculed in Jude earlier drove her back to the living death with Phillotson. She attributed the death of the children to her unorthodox way of life and the intellectual framework of emancipation in her, broke down. This made Jude remark that when bitter affliction came, her intellect broke and she veered round to darkness. The final breakdown came when she mourned.

We must conform! All the ancient wrath of the power above us has been vented upon us, his poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God.

'It is only against man and senseless circumstances', said Jude.21

Jude’s struggle between Arabella Donne and Sue Bridgehead that are extremely different characters is actually a
battle between flesh and spirit. D. H. Lawrence considers Jude as a victim of the strongest passion known to humanity. But what is apparent is the Jude is conventional about women. Arabella called him ‘a baby’ as he was easily deceived by conventional appeal. Jude can be seen as a victim of conventions and traditions. Jude’s complicated initial responses to Sue reveal the confusions in his attitude to woman as a friend and woman as a sexual object. Jude ponders: “If he could only get over the sense of her sex, as she seemed to be able to do so easily of his what a comrade she would make”.

How can we live together while that man lives?......Think of years to come, and children being born to us and this past matter getting known for it must get known......Well, think of wretches of our flesh and blood growing up under a taunt which they will gradually get to feel the full force of with their expanding years. What an awakening for them? What a prospect. Can you honestly say remain, after contemplating this contingency? Don’t you think we had better endure the ills we have than fly to others?22

Jude is a victim of social institution too, as his dream to getting educated at Christ minister fails due to the lack of
financial resources. To make up for the inadequacies he had suffered from, Jude joined an Artisan’s improvement society to ensure the fulfillment of his dream of enabling poor boys to get enrolled at Christ minister. He felt that his struggle will be fruitful, even though he may not himself, live to witness the success. He asserted that the University was not established for the wealthy but for people like him.

It was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one, any my impulses – affections – vices perhaps they should be called – were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages; who should be as cold – blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country’s worthies.

......Crass casually obstructs the sun and rain, and dicing, Time for gladness casts a moan......These purblind Doomsters had readily strewn Blesses about my pilgrimage as pain.23

Jude happened to be immensely changes by his experiences while Sue remained just an ever – increasingly
accumulation of dogmas. By the time he became agnostic, Sue's own racial ideas had collapsed under the attack of conventions and traditions. Even though Jude and Sue failed to live as man and wife out of wedlock due to social pressures, their experiment was totally new to the Victorian era. Jude remarks: "Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!"

Jude the Obscure received harsh criticism on account of Hardy's frank representation of the British Society of his time. Hardy was accursed of introducing an unholy anti-marriage campaign. This gave him the reputation of an immoral writer intent on destroying marriage. Though Hardy was critical about marriage as an institution, he was not against monogamy. However, there were some sincere correspondents who agreed with Hardy's contention that the novel was a moral treatise, dealing with an austere subject affecting the society.
REFERENCES

1. ibid. P. 181.

2. ibid. P. 182.

3. ibid. P. 183.


10. ibid. P. 280.


19. ibid. P. 394.

20. ibid. P. 394.
