PREFACE

The greatness of Thomas Hardy lies in the versatility of his art. He was a poet, novelist, playwright, short-story writer and also the writer of his own life, in the autobiography written in the third person supposedly by F.E. Hardy, his second wife. His long life, comprising eighty-eight years, provided breath and blood to more than sixty years of his active literary career. Though Hardy considered himself to be first and foremost a poet his popularity as a successful novelist encouraged critics to analyse the portion of truth in his fiction and the fiction in his autobiography. Hardy’s poetry never lacked dedicated readers and critical attention. But initially, it became a means to substantiate the critical findings of his novels. Though, with the passage of time, scholars and critics have learnt to appreciate his creative genius in the two literary genres differently his poetry still remains largely unexplored as compared to his novels. The present study endeavours to explore the multiple facets of love in Hardy’s poetry.

Love has inspired more poetry throughout the ages than any other subject. Uncountable attempts, even by the most talented writers, world-wide, to define or at least describe love have only succeeded only in establishing love as a universally central, compulsive literary theme. Every attempt at defining this complex emotion conclusively has fallen short of comprehending all its complexities. The portrayal of love in Hardy’s poetry encompasses the different facets perceptible in the
prism of love. The depiction of love, in his poems, spans from the simple homely relationships to the love of nature and animals on the one hand, and on the other, from raw animal passion to the compassionate and humanitarian love for mankind. Hardy's poetry, which treats the physical, emotional, spiritual aspects of love, in all its predicaments through innumerable combinations, seeks to record the different stages of love and its mysterious modus-operandi, in an attempt to find a mature answer to the problems of life and interpersonal relationships.

I would like to record my veneration to late Professor Chandolikar who lent me two books on Hardy while I was in my Post-Graduation. He left for his heavenly abode before I could return them. His bereaved family allowed me to retain those books and probably sowed the seeds for this work.

I must express my heartfelt gratitude towards Dr. M.A.Syed, who guided, invigorated, inspired and encouraged me. I owe him a special debt that can never be repaid.

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to sniff books located titles that would have otherwise eluded my focused search for relevant books.

My wife, Arti Khindri, and our children, Abha & Abhay sacrificed many outings and social events so that I could pursue research. Without their care, support, encouragement and patience this work would have been unimaginable.

This work has been helped by so many generous individuals that in the end I can only thank God for His kindness and the generosity He destined for me.