CHAPTER-III

Man and Nature

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found
Life-loyalties. 1

A detailed examination of Wessex Poems and Other Verses (1898) and subsequent volumes of Hardy's poetry reveals his exploration of man's suffering amidst Nature -- a suffering mainly caused by man's own materialistic way of life. Similarly, we see Hardy, an evolutionary meliorist, trying in the light of existentialist ethic, to evolve a way of life which will make human existence endurable, if not happy.

The protagonists of Hardy's poems, encompassed by biological and social environments, search for a peaceful and productive way of life. As a matter of course, in the trials and tribulations of life they seek consolation and contentment amidst the things of Nature. However, their success or failure of attainment of selfhood in their surroundings largely depends upon their mode of relationship with Nature. Over this issue of man's ultimate relationship

1. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit., p. 65 (Underline added).
with his biological environment, many arguments have been put forth since the time of the 'Great Greeks'. But it is from the time of the French Revolution (1789) when Romantic literature appeared on the horizon, with the doctrine of J.J.Rousseau's (1712-1778) 'Return to Nature', serious discussions about 'Man-Nature' relationship received full consideration both in literature and philosophy.

In existential philosophy, man's relationship with his biological environment has been fully expounded. On this issue, the existentialists are divided into two groups -- one comprising of Heidegger, Jaspers, Ponty and Camus, and the other of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre.

According to the first group of thinkers, Nature is stated to be attractive, loving, inspiring, kindly, friendly, glorious, sublime and magnanimous in its stature and grandeur. Jaspers, the leader of the first group, thinks that Nature is basically made to support all forms of life on earth. According to him, this is shown by her eternal cycle of production, reproduction and magnanimous presence. She is a renewable source of man's livelihood, shelter, contentment, health and happiness. She is also the promoter of harmonious human existence as well as destroyer of ugly aspects of life. Since time immemorial, it is Nature which has promoted many generations of life as well as tolerated man's ruthless atrocities. Against this background of Nature, Jaspers states man must treat her as a being with love, faith,
respect and regard. He must also know the sorrows of Nature and witness the death of her flora and fauna without any superstitious veneration or malignant enmity. Indeed, man must have special love and regard for Nature which supports man in all aspects of life. If she is loved and venerated man will certainly get fulfilment in her company.

On the other hand, the other group of thinkers led by Sartre rejects Jaspers' view of Nature that Nature is friendly, loving, compassionate, sublime and magnanimous. On the contrary, they argue that Nature is cruel, harmful, malignant and gratuitous. These thinkers hold that Nature can never be inspiring and compassionate to the enrichment of human existence. Sartre holds the view that Nature is neither benevolent nor neutral. On the contrary, it is malevolent to the existence of human beings. According to him, it is a "great gnarled paw". In fact, he says, whatever Nature may be created for, it is not for the benevolence of human beings as it is a senseless destroyer and a meaningless excess.

However, these views of Jaspers and Sartre have their counterpoints in the poems of Hardy. As Nature is the background to the thought and action of his protagonists, Hardy's poems highlight and evaluate Nature's presence in both its positive and negative aspects.

2. J. P. Sartre, quoted by Mary Warnock, The Philosophy of Sartre, op. cit., p. 94.
Hardy's earlier poems are chiefly nature poems where Nature is depicted as a companion of human beings. Hardy's love for Nature led him to the observation of Nature's workings and its impact on the existence of human beings. He provides a broad and idealistic setting of Nature as the background in his early poems. According to him, the availability and abundance of peace, tranquillity, wealth and joy in Nature make human life happier and endurable. He says its beauty and bounty make human life devoid of conflicts. Several of Hardy's poems celebrate this aspect of Nature's love, warmth, compassion, inspiration and wealth.

Right from Hardy's earliest poem 'Domicilium' written in 1858, we see his preoccupation with Nature's flora and fauna. His beautiful Nature poem 'Weathers' displays how man's harmonious and fruitful relationship with Nature is a blend of love, faith, mercy, affection and veneration. The poem mirrors man's intimate relationship with Nature for help and happiness. The protagonist of the poem lives as happily as Gabriel Oak of Far from the Madding Crowd and Deggory Venn of The Return of the Native. In fact, his existence is in perfect harmony with Nature:

\[
\text{THIS is the weather the cuckoo likes,} \\
\text{And so do I;} \\
\text{When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,} \\
\text{And nestlings fly:} \\
\text{And the little brown nightingale bills his best,} \\
\text{And they sit outside at 'The Travellers' Rest',} \\
\text{And maids come forth sprig - muslin drest,} \\
\text{And citizens dream of the south and west,} \\
\text{And so do I.}
\]
This is the weather the shepherd shuns,
And so do I;
When beeches drip in browns and duns,
And thresh, and play;
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,
And meadow rivulets overflow,
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,
And rooks in families homeward go,
And so do I.  

Another poem 'Summer Schemes', in the same
collection (LLE - p.564) reveals man's fruitful co-existence
with Nature which is better than his mechanical life in the
Wastelandian world of urbanized towns. Even Hardy's earliest
poem 'Domicilium' written in Wordsworthian style, is
successful in showing the positive aspects of 'Man-Nature'
relationship. The poem describes how the old cottage was
encompassed by high beaches, veil of boughs, apple trees, red
roses, lilacs and green fields on hills. The poem celebrates
the surroundings of Wessex heath-croppers, wood-cutters and
herdsmen. The forms of life delineated in the poem are more
in harmony with Nature than the life of their modern
counterparts. Similarly, harmonious existence of the older
generations who relied on Nature for most things is vividly
depicted in another poem, 'An Unkindly May'. In this
pastoral poem a simple shepherd's life with his sheep, has
been shown in consonance with natural milieu. The last two
lines of the poem indicate the shepherd's sense of duty:

3. Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics and Earlier, op. cit., p. 563.
That shepherd still stands in that white smock-frock,
Unnoting all things save the counting his flock. 4

These lines remind one of the last stanza of the
well-known nature poem, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy
Evening' by Robert Frost (1874-1963):

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep. 5

The shepherd, like the protagonist of Robert
Frost's poem, knows that he cannot stand in the grassland
enjoying the beauty of Nature, as he has to attend to his
duty. Thus the poem brings home an important fact of human
existence.

In fact, to support his view that 'man' and
'biological environment' are closely related to each other,
Hardy quotes the view of Max Muller: "We with our modern ways
of life are not aware how everything we think or speak or do
is dependent on the sun."6

4. Thomas Hardy, "Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres"
reprinted in The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, edited by
Reuben A. Brower (New York: OUP., 1963), p. 34.
6. Thomas Hardy, "Literary Notes I" edited by L.A.Bjork,
The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. I., op. cit., p.
168 (1359).
Hardy regards Nature as an animate being who is powerful enough to create, recreate and destroy anything. The poet soon learns that "almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quaverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall." Hence, man is obliged to treat Nature as a living being which will make his existence happy and endurable. Buber, an existentialist thinks that man's existence can be successful only if he is sufficiently devoted to Nature. He expounds, "... in the 'I-thou' relation, we have to think of even natural entities, including inanimate objects, in terms of the relation in which they take their stand."

 Nevertheless, Nature in Hardy's poems does not appear either as a teacher or mother as in Wordsworth's poetry. It simply appears as neutral and sometimes even as indifferent to the existence of human beings. However, it is left to man whether to be friendly or hostile towards Nature

to make his life fruitful. In this regard, there is no difference of opinion between Jaspers, the existentialist thinker, and Hardy the poet.

On a closer examination of Hardy's Nature poems, one more idea strikes us, and that is his distinction between 'village life' and 'city life'. In this connection, Howard Babb remarks, "At bottom Hardy's story juxtaposes two different worlds or modes of being, the natural against the civilized and it insists on the superiority of the former by identifying the natural as strong, enduring, self-contained, slow to change, sympathetic, while associating the civilized with weakness, modernity, self-centredness." 9 In Hardy's poetry, the difference in the milieu of urban life and rustic life is glaring and manifold. Urban life is depicted as complex, mechanical, deceptive and considerably erratic, whereas, rustic life is shown as simple, natural, noble and considerably harmonious. But, Hardy appears to contradict himself in the following statement which is to be found in his notes: "If in a town lodging an honest man's daughter should have an illegitimate child; or his wife should take to drinking, he is not compelled by any squire to pack up his furniture and get his living elsewhere; as is or

was lately, too often, the case in the country." Kierkegaard supports Hardy’s view when he speaks of his hero’s failure in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to get a response from city people for his speech, whereas, village people readily responded. Therefore, he calls city people 'crowd' and village people 'Volk'. On the basis of our study of Hardy’s pastoral aspects, we can conclude that his depiction of landscape portrays human existence in the countryside as primarily in consonance with the natural environment.

The reason for this harmonious life of the rustics is that they primarily depend on Nature for everything. They treat her as their fellow-being with love, fidelity, regard and reverence. In return, Nature provides everything which the rustic people require for their life.

As seen in the poems of Hardy quoted above, village men consult trees, air, earth, sun, rain, snow, wind, dawn and darkness, when they get down to work. Life to them is comfortable only when the earth yields abundant crops.

On the other hand, life in urban areas is quite different. It is artificial, disharmonious and erratic. According to Hardy, this is largely due to the impact of industrialization. The advent of science and technology has

commercialized life and deprived man of his basic attachment to Nature. This adverse impact of industrialization has not only made man independent of Nature, but also of his fellow human beings. Hardy thinks there is no greater tragedy than man’s overdependence on machines for everything. Therefore, he questions, "Will not the men of the future look back with wonder on the ages in which religion, philosophy, and the science of nature were supposed to be at war, instead of being, as they will be then, one system?" He observes that on account of this mishap, man’s harmonious co-existence with Nature has disintegrated.

Several of Hardy’s poems, particularly those written after his encounter with London life in 1862, show how man’s life has undergone a sea-change from that of his simple ancestor. The scientific discoveries and inventions have led to man’s exploitation of Nature for his own selfish interests. His knowledge and mastery over Nature has intensified this process of exploitation of natural surrounding both in its animate and inanimate forms for the glorification of his materialistic way of life. The development of science and technology has increased and intensified the wide-spread process of urbanization and industrialization resulting in a kind of chaos which man

finds it difficult to control. As a result, man has become complex in nature and materialistic in attitude.

Hardy, a keen observer of the disturbance in natural environ, has vividly depicted man's destruction of Nature's wealth. The following poem, 'A Backward Spring' illustrates how the trees are afraid of human disturbance:

THE trees are afraid to put forth buds,
And there is timidity in the grass;  

Another poem 'Logs on the Hearth' highlights man's selfish exploitation of Nature neglecting his own good:

THE fire advances along the log
Of the tree we felled,
Which bloomed and bore striped apples by the peck
Till its last hour of bearing knelled.
Sawn, sapless, darkening with soot. 

Because of industrialization, man's exploitation of Nature has resulted in the pollution of water, weather, sound, soil and all other aspects of congenial atmosphere. Hardy's poem 'Genoa and the Mediterranean' speaks of the pollution of sea. However, Hardy, the humanist, asks the sea to put up with the inhumanity of man:

Similarly, man's merciless hunting of birds is portrayed in the poem, 'The Bird-Catcher's Boy':

'Larks bruise and bleed in jail, 
    Trying to rise; 
Every caged nightingale
    Soon pines and dies.'  

Hardy was much sensitive and sympathetic towards the animals, birds and creatures of the woods. When asked about the condition of animals on the eve of war, he thus replied, "As a preliminary, all civilized nations might at least show their humanity by covenanting that no horse should be employed in battle except for transport. Soldiers, at worst, know what they are doing, but these animals are denied even the poor possibilities of glory and reward as a compensation for their sufferings."  

16. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E. Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (1892-1928), op. cit., p. 81.
Hardy's sensitiveness and compassion towards the dumb birds and beasts is touchingly humane. In the poem, 'The Blinded Bird' which is about the suffering of a blind bird, he asks who can be more charitable and tolerant than this blind bird who sings joyously despite 'man' and 'Nature's' indignity:

Who hath charity? This bird.
Who suffereth long and is kind,
Is not provoked, though blind
And alive ensepulchred?
Who hopeth, endureth all things?
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?
Who is divine? This bird. 17

On another occasion when he was invited to the celebration of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty towards Animals in 1924, he wrote an ode called 'Compassion'. The poem is aptly subtitled 'In Celebration of the Centenary of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals'. The poem is a hearty response to the cries still heard in all the secret corners of the world, getting no compassionate response from the human hearts:

But still those innocents are thralls
To throbless hearts, near, far, that hear no calls
Of honour towards their too-dependent frail,
And from Columbia Cape to Ind we see
How helplessness breeds tyranny
In power above assail. 18

17. Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses, op. cit., p. 446.
Hardy's second wife Florence Hardy thought that the poem served to demonstrate the poet's passionate hatred of injustice and barbarity towards the lower creatures.

If this is the case with man's relationship with dumb creatures what about his relation with his fellow beings? Hardy asks whether man co-exists in harmony with his fellow human beings. He finds that the answer is negative. Man's injustice to man and other creatures makes a hell of heaven.

According to the poet, man's greed to attain maximum benefit from Nature and to lead a luxurious life which is promised by modern science has disrupted his way of life amidst Nature in a considerable way. Above all, it has deprived him of his 'spiritual attachment' with age old tradition of rites and rituals. That is why, both Hardy and Jaspers think that, man may have knowledge and mastery over Nature's wealth, but he should not misuse them. Jaspers speculates that man may obtain whatever he requires from Nature if he devotes himself to her wishes. He declares, "Nature, once she confronts us, has a two-fold character. She is material to be used, to be consumed, and to be made; she is the object of our rule. But she is also self-sufficient essence out of the depth of being." 19 Therefore,

man must understand and treat her as his fellow-being, a friend and a guide; and he should co-exist with her as his companion. Otherwise, "If Nature becomes nothing but material for exploitation, the will is thrown exclusively in the direction of the quantitative....... The impoverishment of man's soul is the result of his lust for quality."\(^2\) This view of existentialist ethic has been shared by Hardy when he quotes L.N. Tolstoi (1828-1910): "The first condition of happiness he (T) tells us, is that the link between man and Nature shall not be broken."\(^1\)

It is owing to man's utter disregard of Nature and his ruthless exploitation of her beauty and wealth that she has become not only neutral but also indifferent to his misery and suffering. Nature's neutrality towards human existence is best delineated in Hardy's poem 'An Autumn Rain-Scene', where Nature is portrayed as not only neutral but also as indifferent to a party goer; to a man hurrying to fetch the saving medicament; and to a herdsman, a postman and to a coastguard:


No care if he gain a shelter or none,
Unhired moves one,
On whom the rain comes down.

And another knows nought of its chilling fall
Upon him at all,
On whom the rain comes down. 22

On all these personages rain comes down hampering their course of life. But this does not outweigh the fact that people just get on with things despite the natural phenomenon which often troubles them. Nature can thus be either benevolent or malevolent or neutral towards human existence, because of man's treatment.

Contrary to these views of Jaspers and the earlier Hardy that Nature is benevolent, Sartre thinks Nature can never be compassionate to the misery and suffering of human existence. Nature is neither an animate being nor a conscious power to alleviate human pain. According to him, it is, as earlier mentioned, a 'gnarled paw' and a 'mass of biological objects'.

Hardy seems to agree with Sartre after he came under the influence of Charles Darwin, T.H.Huxley, J.S.Mill and Herbert Spencer. As his observation and experience of life grew, his view of 'Man-Nature' relationship underwent a sea-change. Subsequently, his love and veneration for Nature and his faith in Nature diminished in proportion to the

22. Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics and Earlier, op. cit., p. 612-613.
growth of his thought. This aspect of his thought is clearly reflected in his later poems.

'Wessex Heights', one of his long poems, discloses Nature's indifferent presence to a deserted man of the town who is walking on his favourite Wessex heights. In the gruesome state of his life, Nature neither consoles him, nor makes his life endurable, for as Sartre points out, it is largely unconscious of human suffering:

THERE are some heights in Wessex, shaped as if by a kindly hand
For thinking, dreaming, dying on, and at crises when I stand. 23

Similarly, the poems, 'The Slow Nature', 'The Bride-Night Fire' and 'The Subalterns' show Nature's neutrality towards the misfortunes of human existence. Here Nature is presented as a destroyer of man's authentic mode of life. Pain, suffering, sickness and death are shown as indivisible parts of natural phenomenon. For instance, death in the poem 'The Slow Nature' comes to end a man's life in the form of an accident and makes his wife a prey to slow decay. When Damon hears the news of her husband John's death caused by a bull in a distant land, her agony is intense:

She disappeared; and the joker stood
Depressed by his neighbour's doom,

And amazed that a wife struck to widowhood
   Thought first of her unkempt room.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,
   And she pined in a slow decay; 24

In the long ballad 'Bride-Night Fire' another sort of tragic death by Nature's calamity is depicted. Here death lays its icy hands in an accidental fire on a young man Tranter Sweetly when he is celebrating his wedding ceremony and leaves his betrothed in perpetual agony. At the end of the ballad, we see how the one-day bride's life ends in frustration and failure:

   ... She said, 'I declare
       I stand as a maiden to-day!' 25

The ballad is written in terse language, but its thought is superb as Hardy's philosophical attitude towards Nature has advanced. Likewise, in the poem 'The Subalterns', Nature is shown as an agent heaping cruelty on human beings. Here death, sickness, Nature and sky all collaborate to bring about destruction and death to mankind:

   -- 'Come hither, Son,' I heard Death say;
       'I did not will a grave
       Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
       But I, too, am a slave! ' 26

The important notes of Hardy's thought are struck here — the suffering and helplessness of man, the inevitability of fate and the carelessness of the deities. Samuel Chew comments significantly that: "... the leaden sky, the north wind, disease, death and destruction, disclaim responsibility for the functions which they are compelled to do."27

In this context, one more thing is to be borne in mind — Nature is not only cruel to human beings but also to birds, beasts and trees. Nature's indifference towards birds and beasts is shown in the poem 'The Bullfinches':

All we creatures, nigh and far
(Said they there), the Mother's are:
Yet she never shows endeavour
To protect from warrings wild
Bird or beast she calls her child. 28

This sort of sorrow and disappointment of 'birds' and 'beasts' has resulted because of Nature's want of sufficient food and fodder for its creatures. The same theme is reflected in another poem, 'Winter in Durnover Field' where birds find no grain and as a result starve:

Starling. - "Aye: patient pecking now is vain
Throughout the field, I find .......
Rook.- No grain!

Here the repetition of the phrases 'no grain throughout the land' and 'encrusted with frost' indicates Nature's full indifference to the existence of birds. As the seasons worsen both birds and beasts either migrate in search of food, or starve.

On the other hand, are species in Nature free from conflicts? Hardy's Nature poem, 'In a Wood' which is about Nature's indifference towards man, gives a negative answer:

Even the rank poplars bear
Lothly a rival's air,
Cankering in black despair
If overborne. 30

Similarly, the condition of peasants is not good and enduring due to natural calamities like devastating floods and droughts. Moreover, on account of social conflicts, political oppression and psychological tensions, the life of agriculturists in rural areas has degenerated. As a whole, man's co-existence with the Nature is not harmonious and fruitful. Consequently, everything is in disorder and disintegration. As a keen observer of this circumstance Hardy puts it thus: " 'The labourers have

29. Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, op. cit., p. 149.
30. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit., p. 64.
become more and more migratory', and as a consequence village tradition -- a vast mass of unwritten folklore, local chronicle, local topography, and nomenclature -- is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion.  

In a majority of Hardy’s poems, Nature appears unsympathetic and malevolent. Indeed, it seems to be an impediment to the course of human progress and enlightenment:

So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love nct, brings.  

When Hardy came under the influence of Charles Darwin, J.S. Mill, T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Sir Charles Lyell, Sir Leslie Stephen and a host of other leading biologists, thinkers and philosophers, his view of man’s ultimate relationship with Nature underwent a total change. In the light of this new perspective, he feels 'Man-Nature’ relationship usually ends in aberration. Accordingly, he made an entry in his diary in 1837: "I feel that Nature is played out as a Beauty, but not a Mystery. I don’t want to see landscapes, i.e., scenic paintings of them, because

31. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), op. cit., p. 46.
I don’t want to see the original realities - as optical effects, that is, I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imagination." As a result, he begs her:

SHOW thee as I thought thee
When I early sought thee.  

Hardy also questions Nature whether she will alleviate the misery and suffering of human beings caused by her:

WHEN wilt thou wake, O Mother, wake and see -
The coils that thou hast wrought unwittingly;
Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,
Thy whole high heaving firmamental frame,
Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?  

The poet regrets that Nature neither adjusts nor amends her infliction of misery on man unwittingly wrought by her calamities like floods and droughts. He also regrets that instead of consoling the suffering human beings, she remains neutral. The poem 'Last Look round St.Martin's Fair' displays the outright malevolence of not only Nature but also of the whole universe to mankind:

33. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E.Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), op. cit., p. 31.
34. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit., p.61.
35. Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, op. cit., p. 121-122.
THE sun is like an open furnace door,
Whose round revealed retort confines the roar
Of fires beyond terrene;
The moon presents the lustre-lacking face
Of a brass dial gone green,
Whose hours no eye can trace.

The unsold heathcroppers are driven home. 36

Hardy's later view of Nature is explained by David
Cecil and J.R.Brooks. The former remarks, "... he (Hardy)
would have been disinclined to worship it even if it had
possessed a soul. For nature, to Hardy, was far from being
all beauty and goodness. It had its beautiful aspects - and
no one appreciated them more sensitively - but it had other
aspects too: cruelty, indifference and caprice. Indeed, in
nature he saw repeated the same blind and selfish struggle
that he found in the life of man." 37 In fact, she is engaged
in constant destruction and devising ways and means of
torturing them with impunity. J.R.Brooks thinks Hardy sounds
the death knell of the old romantic views of nature poetry.

Nature is not affected by the suffering of human
beings. Like a hard-hearted criminal, she is sitting on her
throne with the gesture of an immovable dictator, whose word
is unchangeable malignant law. This view confirmed by the
leading thinkers of the time swept away Hardy's earlier

36. Thomas Hardy, Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs and
Trifles, op. cit., p. 765.
37. David Cecil, Hardy The Novelist: An Essay in Criticism
concept of Nature, that she is a mother, exercising an ennobling influence on her creatures.

However, Hardy, like Gautam Buddha, thinks that ignorance is the main cause of human misery and suffering, and pain and suffering are essential accompaniments of human existence. They are so powerful as to swallow joy and happiness which sometimes suffuse life and put people into the illusory world of happiness and contentment. He thinks happiness is an illusion and punished are those who seek it. Because happiness is a temporary cessation of desire. Desire is an expression of a want; it is, in fact, a form of pain. Therefore, happiness is the deliverance from pain; it is, indeed, only a negative, and never a positive state. When Nature is viewed and explored only for man's materialistic purposes, when she is ruthlessly exploited and treated as an instrument, man can never get peace, tranquillity and spiritual consolation from her. It is true, owing to man's exploitation of Nature's resources, there is every possibility of impoverishment of the human soul and an utter degradation of human values. Therefore, Nietzsche considering science as the root cause of degeneration of human existence, describes it as the "'.... transformation of Nature into concepts for the purpose of governing Nature'."38 The advanced knowledge and the progress of

civilization does not improve matters as science simply brings with it problems which can never be solved in the present situation. Similarly, the so-called virtues, whatever they may be, which float in the air of the modern world of science and commerce are merely refined egoism. Indeed, the chief limitation of science is its incompleteness, and on account of man's scientism and materialism, there is no escape for man from the pangs of suffering in Nature. Subsequently, life like a pendulum, oscillates between joy and sorrow. Therefore, Arthur Schopenhauer aptly remarks, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Similarly, Hardy writes to a friend: "What we gain by science is, after all, sadness... the more we know of the laws and nature of the universe, the more ghastly a business one perceives it all to be ", and it is among the uneducated, that happiness will find her last refuge on earth, since it is among them that a perfect insight into the conditions of existence will be longest postponed". Confirming Hardy's view, J.I.M. Stewart thinks human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed. Nature can be trusted enough but Hardy adds that the

degrading universe of modern scientism and materialism gives man more pain than pleasure. According to him, the 'Prime Mover' whether personified as either 'love' or 'chance' or 'Nature' persuades us to a world which is devoid of any virtues that support human existence. In T.S. Eliot's (1888-1968) words such a world is aptly called 'Pure Evil' or 'Wasteland'. Therefore, Hardy thought that: "..... to model our conduct on Nature's apparent conduct, .... can only bring disaster to humanity". Even existentialist thinkers felt that the indifference of Nature falsifies our calculations and betrays our hopes. According to them, if man lives amidst Nature with a hope of self-realization, he will certainly become a victim of circumstance. Upholding this, Tom Paulin says that to Hardy, Nature seemed a ruined church. Whatever Nature offers to man, behind it lies the greater indifference to the lot of man. Moreover, 'Natural laws' certainly hamper the course of human existence. Thus, Nature's state of unconsciousness leads creatures to mourn and decay as we have seen in the foregoing extracts.

Hardy, like other existentialist thinkers, comes to the conclusion that man's place both in Nature and the universe is comparatively insignificant. He thinks man's place on account of his mortality and finitude in the eternity of time and space is unworthy and unimportant. This

is vividly reflected in his poems such as 'An August Midnight' and 'Yall'ham Wood's Story'. For instance, the first poem reflects the view that man's place in the vast universe is of little importance:

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space. 42

Hardy goes further to say that man's life is not merely a tragedy, but Life makes deliberately and vindictively more tragic by first giving hope but denying it later. In fact, hopes are seen to be dupes. This may be seen in the poem 'Yell'ham-Wood's Story':

COOMB - FIRTREES say that Life is a moan,
And Clyffe-hill Clump says 'Yea!'
But Yell'ham says a thing of its own:

It says that Life would signify
A thwarted purposing:

That we come to live, and are called to die.
Yes, that's the thing
In fall, in spring,
That Yell'ham says:-
'Life offers - to ceny!'. 43

Indeed, Hardy thinks that the universe in which human beings struggle for existence, is infinite both in time and space. It is true, man is not the supreme, but a powerless entity in the whole Nature, Society and the

42. Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, op. cit., p. 147.
43. Thomas Hardy, Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses, op. cit., p. 298.
Universe, and the tragic force that rules his destiny certainly overrides his will.

Hardy's mental depression about man's insignificance in the universe can be traced to the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer's work *The World As Will and Idea* (1881), J.S. Mill's essay *On Nature* (1858) and *On Liberty* (1859), Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1863), Von Hartmann's *The Philosophy of the Unconsciousness* (1869) and the works of Sir Charles Lyell, William Herschel and many others. Charles Darwin proved that man and monkey were collateral descendants of a single ancestor and the earth where man struggles is much older than man's ancestors. Furthermore, modern science and technology brought the traditional way of life to an end and made human life extremely complex.

However, man's insignificance both in Nature and Universe does not diminish and destroy his conscience, fortune, power and glory. It will never weaken his 'will-power' which is stronger than Nature and the Universe. Hence, man, who is already an emotional, rational, social and intellectual being, may certainly assert his personal choice in society and achieve a harmonious 'co-existence' and 'perfection'.

To sum up the foregoing views and observations of 'Man-Nature' relationship in Hardy's poetry, we come to the
conclusion that 'Man-Nature' relationship is fruitful so long as man has love, veneration and regard for her. If he harbours ill-will towards her or she remains indifferent to his mode of existence, he alienates himself from her and seeks consolation and contentment amidst his fellow human beings (Society):

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind,
Worthy as these. 44

Whatever may be the reason for man's inevitable alienation from Nature, both Hardy and existentialist thinkers boldly assert that man's active detachment from his biological surroundings will not weaken him. According to them, man's separation from Nature will be counterbalanced by his superiority of conscience and heroic action. They think man, through his heroic mode of life, may alleviate the pain and suffering caused by natural phenomena. Hardy says that man through his peaceful and productive way of life with his fellow human beings may surely attain self-realization.

Thus in existentialism as well as in Hardy's poetry, the superiority of man's consciousness, will-power, action and responsibility for self-realization have been upheld and glorified. Both existentialist thinkers and

44. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit., p. 65.
Hardy uphold the view that man is the master of all things. As a result, Hardy concludes, "An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by Unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand."\(^{45}\) In this way Hardy claims man's inherent freedom and responsibility for his ultimate self-realization.

The alienated man's struggle for self-realization after his separation from Nature, is elaborated in the following chapter.

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