CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION
I. Life and Works of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy, the poet and novelist of the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, was born on 2nd June 1840 in a small picturesque cottage built for his grandfather 'Thomas the first' (1778-1837) in 1801 in Higher Bockhampton, Dorchester, a hundred miles from London. This Dorchester, which later became a region at the heart of Hardy's Wessex, and which was covered by the Stinsford parish and the majestic Egdon (Puddletown) heath, was grand in its simplicity and nobility. His father 'Thomas the second' (1811-1892) and his grandfather 'Thomas the first' were connected with the profession of architecture. At one time the Hardies had been well known in Dorset. His epic drama The Dynasts (1904-1908) was inspired by his ancestor, the famous Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy (1769-1839) who had been a captain of Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar when the latter died. However, the fortunes of the family declined later on account of the later Hardies' laziness. Hardy, the writer, thus brooded over the decline in the fortunes of his family.

His father was a buoyant kindly man, passionately fond of music; and he was a violinist and a singer much in demand at village festivities. Hardy's mother, Jemima Hand (1813-1904) was affectionate, cultured and more ambitious than her husband. It was under her care and affection, that
the boy learnt music and dance before he went to school. She came of a family very fond of reading and she was a systematic and stimulating gentlewoman whose store of memories made remarkable contribution to the upbringing of the little Hardy.

Soon after his dramatic appearance into the world, the boy learnt to read the books offered by his mother. He went to a non-conformist school and learnt Latin and French. As a sensitive boy, Hardy came across many harsh and painful events. He saw a shepherd boy starved to death, a half-frozen bird falling dead by his father’s stone, ravages of cholera and two public hangings at Dorchester which he remembered the rest of his life.

As the boy grew, his parents thought of sending him to Oxford with a view to make him a clergyman. But John Hicks the noted architect and family friend accepted him as a pupil in architectural studies. It is here that Hardy studied diligently many works of great writers in the company of Horace Moule (1832-1873), a Cambridge scholar, and William Barnes (1800-1886), a Dorset poet whose works he edited later.

In 1862, Hardy went to London for studying the art and science of architecture on a more advanced level. It was here that he desired to study for the church, but gave up the idea when he realized that he had no faith in the established religion. He completed the study of architecture under the
guidance of Sir Arthur Blomfield (1832-1899) and acquired much knowledge of human existence. Nevertheless, many people considered Hardy as half-educated. Hardy like William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and D. H. Lawrence did not have the conventional public school and Oxford education, but had read widely and thought more deeply than many highly educated scholars. He was interested in a very wide range of subjects. He knew classical literature, William Shakespeare, the Bible and many of the great English men of letters.

By the time he reached London in 1862, he had determined to become a poet, but failed to get acquainted with great poets like Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1907) and Robert Browning (1812-1889) who lived close by. He wrote many poems and sent them to magazines but they were rejected. Then he tried his hand at novel writing simply to earn a livelihood and fame as a writer. Though he lived near Charles Dickens, W.M.Thackeray (1811-1863) and George Eliot (1819-1880), he never tried either to meet them or to read their novels. However, he was influenced by poets much more than novelists. He read William Shakespeare, John Milton (1608-1674) and admired the romantic poets. He has more in common with William Wordsworth (1770-1850) as far as the themes and language of his poems and novels are concerned. He was deeply interested in man's ultimate relationship with the world.
Nevertheless, Hardy was not happy in the capital as he was tired of the sick urban way of life. Therefore, when he got a chance invitation in 1867 from his former master John Hicks from Dorchester, he readily accepted it and returned home.

The first published work of Hardy is neither a novel nor a poem, but an essay *On the Application of Coloured Bricks and Terra Cotta to Modern Architecture* (1864). He sent his first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1868), based on the contrast between city life and village life, to Macmillan in vain. Then he decided to get it published at his own cost, but he gave up the idea on the advice of George Meredith (1828-1909) to find his public with a novel of a more complicated plot. It was at this time that he passionately fell in love with his cousin Tryphena Sparks (1851-1890) and considered her his 'Lost Prize'. His love-affair with Tryphena Sparks was intimate and passionate, but he could not marry her. Then he went to St. Juliot near Boscastle in Cornwall to restore a church. It was here, he came to know and love Miss Emma Lavinia Gifford (1840-1912), the sister of the Rector's wife and their marriage took place in 1874 at St. Peter's, Paddington. In the same year, he devoted himself to writing and gave up architecture.

Meanwhile, his novel *Desperate Remedies* (1870) had appeared anonymously without any warm reception. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), which followed *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1871), was admired by Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) and
Coventry Patmore (1823-1896), the leading poets of the day. Similarly, his admirer Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) published his next novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). Hardy’s relationship with Sir Leslie Stephen was more intimate as his second wife Florence Hardy (1879-1937) has noted in her husband’s biography.

In the following year 1874, soon after their marriage, the Hardies toured France and then settled down in Sturminster Newton. It was here that they spent their happiest days untroubled by the disparities of their temperament which later saddened their union. Meanwhile, Hardy got his next novel *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) published. He read Joseph Addison (1672-1719), Lord Macaulay (1800-1859) Cardinal Newman (1801-1890), Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) and *The Times* in an effort to polish his style.

When Hardy was in search of reputation and decided not to appear merely as a provincial novelist, he received two more requests for new novels. As a result, *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *The Trumpet Major* (1880) appeared. At the same time, he was asked for short stories. Consequently, the best of them, collected in *Wessex Tales* (1888), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891) and *Life's Little Ironies* (1894) were published.

During these years he was worried as he had no issue. Nevertheless, he completed his next novel *A Laodicean* (1881) in great ill-health to keep his word to an American
editor, Harper. After his recovery from an internal haemorrhage, he came to Dorset and built a fine house called MaxGate (1885). It was here that all of his later works were written. A comet, which he saw in the year 1882 inspired him to write a slightly built romance Two on a Tower (1882). Soon an article appreciating his literary achievements appeared in Westminster Review. Immediately afterwards his ambitious novel The Mayor of Casterbridge (1885) appeared and was warmly received on both sides of the Atlantic, and his fame and fortune were well established. Similarly, his other novel The Woodlanders (1887) was published in the prestigious Macmillan magazine.

In the year 1876, the Hardies travelled widely and visited Holland, France, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland. They often stayed in London and befriended many great persons including Edmund Gosse (1845-1928) who became a lifelong friend. During these years, Hardy wrote some essays on fiction i.e., The Profitable Reading of Fiction (1887), Candour in English Fiction (1889) and The Science of Fiction (1891). At the same time he began writing the novel Tess of the d’Urbervilles and in the following year (1891) he found it in print. The publication of this novel was followed by many indignant and unreasonable attacks. However, this increased the sale of his novels and brought him fame and fortunes. Wherever Hardy went, Edmund Gosse says, he heard its praise. In fact, Tess of the d’Urbervilles took Hardy to the forefront of the
living novelists. Moreover, the publication of Lionel Johnson's remarkable critical work *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (1894) consolidated his stature as an established novelist.

Opinion has been divided about Hardy's last novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895) which is a story of two cousins who fall in love with each other but marry the wrong persons. The novel was banned on account of its atheism. According to an American critic it was one of the most objectionable books that Hardy ever wrote. Moreover, Hardy received many mortifying letters which upset him, and he became extremely disheartened. This aspect of Hardy's personal crises is reflected in his poems 'Wessex Heights' (SC-p.319) and 'In Tenebris' I and II (PPP-p.167-168). In this state of things perhaps the most painful thing was that his wife Emma instead of consoling him, apparently made attempts to stop the publication of the novel *Jude the Obscure*.

It is from here that Hardy's tragic years with his wife Emma began. Troubled by Hardy's atheism, rusticity, enquiring spirit (cynicism) and his dislike of the existing marriage and divorce systems, she became almost Hardy's enemy. As a result, she began to belittle her husband. In addition, social and religious disparities between them added their mite to the rootcause of their mutual crises.

Meanwhile, Hardy published his less popular novel *The Well Beloved* (1896) and in order to forget the publication of his novel *Jude the Obscure*, he went on a tour
of the continent. It was on this tour that he collected the material for his epic drama *The Dynasts*. This adventurous epic which appeared in three books between the years 1904 and 1908, was received with great respect and acclaim.

He turned to writing poetry for consolation and contentment after he received severe criticism for his novels and his married life became tragic. He then talked about his novels with contempt, partly because novel-writing was not his true vocation and partly because they made him unpopular. His first volume of poems *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* came out in 1898, a century after the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*. It was a landmark as it marked the beginning of modern poetry. However, the publication of *Wessex Poems* surprised the public which had never thought of Hardy as anything but a novelist. As his poetry was warmly received by the readers, he became happy and decided to continue to write poetry. In this respect, he told an American professor that he would like to be remembered as a poet who had also written some novels. As the years passed by, his stature as a poet was confirmed and his wish to get his poems published in the *Golden Treasury* was fulfilled. While the majority of his novels are criticised, his poems are universally praised. Though many of his poems are neglected by the critics, his reputation as a poet is on the increase in the present century. He became the grand old man or the *doyen* of English letters. But in the year 1912 he was shocked when his first wife Emna died of grief and left
him in trouble. In this mood of grief and loneliness, Hardy wrote many elegies in memory of Emma, which are included in *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries* under the name "Poems of 1912-'13", and are considered to be beautiful. After two years, in 1914, in order to restore his domestic felicity, Hardy married his private secretary Florence Dugdale.

During the years of his later life Hardy saw the remaining collections of his poems in print - *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909), *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries* (1914), *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (1917), *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922), *Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs and Trifles* (1925) and *Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres* (1928) and also a verse play, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall* (1923).

Hardy was a conscientious writer and worked hard on his presentation of imagery, diction, prosody and architectonics. His originality, creativity and innovations, which are dealt with later, are really praiseworthy. Even in his old age, he wrote, rewrote, revised and produced new volumes of his poems and novels. When he was 88 years old, his health weakened and he died on 10th January 1928. His burial was witnessed by distinguished writers and great men including the then Prime Minister of England, the Leader of the Opposition, Sir James Barrie (1860-1937), John Galsworthy
(1867-1933), Sir Edmund Gosse, Prof. A.E. Housman (1859-1936), Rudyard Kipling (1845-1936) and G.B. Shaw (1856-1950). His ashes were buried in the West Minster Abbey in the presence of a great gathering. In the presence of rural congregation, after a memorial service, his heart was buried in the grave of his first wife Emma Hardy. As a mark of honour to the departed writer, all business ceased for an hour.

Thomas Hardy, the noted poet, novelist, short story writer and an architect was duly honoured by his countrymen. He was a member of Savile Club in 1879, became a governor of Dorchester Grammar School, a position he held until 1925. He succeeded George Meredith as President of the Society of Authors; and he received ORDER OF MERIT in 1910. He received the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature in 1912. He was invited to America many a time, but he rejected the invitations. He received many distinguished awards and honours from universities. Aberdeen University conferred upon him the degree of LL.D., and he became the President of the Society of Dorset men in London. Many players readily staged scenes from his novels and epic drama. Cambridge University conferred the degree of D.Litt upon him in 1913, the Oxford University in 1920 and the Bristol University in 1925. In 1914, he joined a band of leading writers who pledged themselves to write for the Allied cause. He became the Honorary Fellow of Magdalene College. When the first World War ended, his 78th birthday was celebrated and he was honoured with a specially bound
volume of poems and tributes from 50 living poets represented by Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967). In 1920, when he was made a Fellow of the R.I.B.A, he paid his last visit to London. Dramatic performances of his works continued and his novel The Mayor of the Casterbridge was made into a film.

The respect and regard shown to Hardy by the younger men gave him special pleasure during his declining years. 106 of his admirers signed an address to him on his 81st birthday and one of the sentences read: "We have learned from you that the proud heart can subdue the hardest fate, even in submitting to it ...." 1

II. Hardy's Literary Merits

In a way Hardy may be called a Victorian for he spent the first 60 years of his life in the 19th century which formed many of his beliefs and ideas. However, he is not a typical Victorian, as he represents a more modern, adventurous and questioning spirit. He was not only a poet and novelist, but also a versatile genius devoted to architecture, music, painting and even to the problems of modern philosophy. Although he did not formulate any philosophy of his own, his vision of life is revolutionary. He came under the pervasive influence of the scientists and atheist thinkers of Victorian England, especially Charles

It was heroic of Hardy that inspite of his loneliness, misery and suffering, he could still carry on. His characteristic double vision of seeing things, both good as well as evil and sublime and silly is noteworthy. In this connection, he was deeply influenced by A.C.Swinburne, an atheist, a poet and a promoter of liberty, and was attracted by his 'Hymn to Proserpine' and 'Hymn of Man'. Both Hardy and A.C.Swinburne were existentialists thinking that man has no priori values and he must solve his problems without any external aid and assistance. Hardy's thought underwent a sea change when he came under the spell of the new faith. His conception that there is no God is due to the influence of Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* (1862) and T.H.Huxley's *Agnosticism and Christianity*. Similarly, his view that Nature and Society cannot always be benevolent to the existence of an individual is due to the influence of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and J.S.Mill's essays. He met both T.H.Huxley and Charles Darwin and he admired them whole-heartedly. Just the same, Hardy saw J.S.Mill once in 1865; he listened to his open air speech; and called him the greatest and most profound thinker of his time. He read his essay *On Liberty* (1859), along with William Wordsworth’s poem *Leech Gatherer* as a cure for his despair. Moreover, his
friendship with Horace Moule, William Barnes, Sir Leslie Stephen, Edmund Gosse and Granville Barker (1877-1946) and many others confirmed his enquiry and conviction. Hardy was a serious and earnest writer. His loss of faith in tradition, religion and God led him to think that man had to create his own order of life for an authentic mode of existence in the world which is rather alien to him.

On account of these vast and varied influences, he became a revolutionary youth. It is due to his sweeping critical views on love, marriage, divorce, London society, Christianity and the dogmatic moral and social systems in general that many of his poems and novels were at once sent back by the editors. Indeed, Hardy was a great humanist and the combination of gentleness and passionate courage made him a unique writer. In politics, he was always on the side of the public and identified himself with the people. He questioned almost all the common assumptions of his time. Therefore, he can be regarded as a modern writer in literature.

Hardy preferred to call himself an 'evolutionary meliorist', that is, one who believes that the world can be made better in course of time. But out of frustration he once said, "What are my books but one plea against man's inhumanity to man, woman, and the lower animals?.... Whatever may be the interest good or evil of life, it is certain that man makes it much worse than it need be when we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time
enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good." This view of Hardy is clearly reflected in his poem 'In Tenebris' II (PPP-p.168).

Hardy's bent of mind for abstract speculative thought led him to study Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1868), Von Hartman (1842-1906) and Haeckel (1834-1919). As a consequence, like A.E. Housman he was called a pessimist and was often considered a gloomy and depressing writer. He was called not only a pessimist, but also a fatalist, non-conformist, agnostic, atheist and 'churchy' in a strictly non-religious sense. However, Hardy was an optimist and humanist, who struggled and excelled in the sphere of human magnanimity and splendour.

Hardy's impact on the younger poets like W.H. Auden (1907-1973) and D.H. Lawrence is great. Like Hardy's novels, D.H. Lawrence's novels were burnt and banned. It is said that where Jude the Obscure ends, The Rainbow begins. Hardy's poetic spirit continued to exist in the works of younger poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas (1878-1917), Robert Graves (1895- ), and many others. Even writers like Ezra Pound (1885-1972), Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), C.Day Lewis (1904- ) and Philip Larkin (1922- ) have proclaimed their adherence to this "Lord of the Wessex Coast". Indeed,

today Hardy is widely read, admired and imitated all over the world.

The answer to the question whether Hardy was a traditionalist or an innovator is two-fold. The critics of Hardy’s time considered him a traditionalist but in a different way. According to them, Hardy followed the tradition both in his life and literature but in a limited way. On the other hand, there are also many critics who think that Hardy is a modernist. It is on account of his poetic innovations, originality, creativity and architectonics that he is considered a modern. These aspects of his poetic merits are discussed in the following pages.

III. Hardy’s Diction, Imagery, Prosody and Architectonics

Because of Hardy’s self-study, vast experience and observation of life, his poetic diction is varied and interesting. He was not simply content to put new wine in old bottles, but he wanted to put new vintage in fresh containers.

Hardy’s vocabulary is vast and varied. He uses learned words and colloquial expressions. He used archaic, obsolete, rare, poetic, coined and dialect words in order to impart his sense of truth and strangeness. His use of dialect words like, ‘garth’ (yard), ‘leaze’ (a grass field), ‘moils’ (drudgery) etc., like that of his fellow poet William Barnes, adds ‘local colour’ to his poetry. Similarly, his use of
obsolete words like 'callcembrace', 'demilune' (half moon), 'dorp' (village) etc, and rare words like 'dolesome', 'griff' and 'lacune' etc. are common. For example, in his poem 'The Revisitation' (TL-p. 191) he uses 'dolesome' instead of 'doleful', 'Griff' to make it rhyme with 'if' and 'lacune' with 'commune'. There are also some weaknesses. Hardy in his early poetry uses Latin words excessively, but they are rare in his poems written later.

Whatever may be the substance of poems, Hardy generally achieves his best effect by means of monosyllabic diction. The outstanding quality of his diction is its economy and accuracy. For example, Hardy in his poem 'New Year's Eve' indicates the four seasons by four words:

'I HAVE finished another year,' said God,
'In grey, green, white, and brown; 3

Hardy's use of imagery is striking. Whatever may be Hardy's source of imagery, whether biblical or literary, or drawn from his keen observation, it throws valuable light on his inner thought and feeling. The most traditional borrowings of his imagery are connected with life, death, fate, God, time and the universe, and the images of his own are connected with youth, love, marriage and the natural

world. For instance, he says 'time' runs like the sand in an hour glass. His biblical images bear witness to his familiarity with the Old and New Testaments. For example, he likens the suffering of the protagonists in 'The Stranger's Song' (WP-p.23) and 'The Flirt's Tragedy' (TL-p.210) to the suffering of Cane. Likewise, the use of 'bond-servants' to characterize mankind; worms in connection with grave and death; and 'mad spinner', 'a pilgrimage' and 'an hour glass' in connection with life is characteristic aspect of his imagery.

The next aspect which counts for his poetic greatness is his prosody the manner in which he has fused his details that contribute to his stature as a poet. As Hardy is not universally acknowledged as a poet on account of his invidious critics, only a few readers of poetry are aware of the extent of his prosodic experiments. In this regard, J.G.Southworth says, "Few know that in the use of the poetic stanza he is one of our most extensive innovators in the modern, or for that matter, any period of our poetry." 4

The critic seems to use the word 'extensive' in a numerical sense. Though Hardy was not a profound experimenter like John Keats (1795-1821) and G.M.Hopkins, he is not a negligible poet. He often uses forms which are

appropriate and they are in close harmony with the subject matter. For example, the iambic dimeter stanza of the poem 'To Lizbie Browne' (PPP-p. 130) ($a^2 b^2 c^2 b^2 c^2 a^2$) catches the timid irresolution of the lover. Hardy has done some experiment in 'prosody' even though it is not significant.

After all aspects of Hardy's poetry have been noted what remains to be noted is his 'poetic technique'. Though Hardy's craft of versification is diverse, it is systematic and harmonious. Similarly, every individual stanza stands in such a way, that it never mars the poetic unity. Just the same, the substance and form of his poems mingle with each other to produce great poetic appeal. For example, the weather determines the stanzaic division in the poem 'Weathers':

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THIS IS the weather the cuckoo likes,
    And so do I;
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,
    And nestlings fly:
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
And they sit outside at 'The Travellers' Rest',
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
    And citizens dream of the south and west,
    And so do I.  
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The time is late spring. Hardy carefully selects the details to make a full, purposive and joyous picture of

'Man-Nature' relationship. J.G.Southworth thinks nothing disturbs the mood of the poet, not even the showers which only 'betumble'. Liquids abound; the vowels are all front and short; the sibilants, explosives and stops are unvoiced.

Even Hardy's literary notes reveal his care for structure, concern for clarity and economy, balance, repetition, alliteration, crystallizing force and many other details. As J.G.Southworth remarks, "He was moving in the right direction and had age not overtaken him and relaxed his powers he might have gone farther than he did."^{6}

I have taken here a few examples of Hardy's diction, imagery, prosody and architectonics as the nature and scope of my thesis does not permit a more detailed study. Indeed, my immediate and serious concern is not 'the way of Hardy's saying the things' but 'What Hardy says about human existence in relation to the biological and material environment and the inner self, and there after what Hardy, as a thinker, says about man's self-purification, self-preservation and self-realization in the light of existentialist ethic'.

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IV. Plan of the thesis

Even though, Hardy is not considered a major poet, he has written eight volumes of poems, and his stature as a great poet has increased in the present century. His poetic greatness is not insignificant, if it is viewed from literary and philosophical standpoints. Hardy's poems express his originality of thought, creativity of poetic emotions and innovations in the fields of diction, imagery, prosody and architectonics. Moreover, they evince Hardy's double vision of seeing things both as silly and sublime. Though, Hardy's poems do not formulate explicitly any philosophy, they show human existence in the light of existentialist ethic. In this regard, one has to study and assess Hardy's philosophy of life only after a deep examination of his poems.

With my concern which is to study and evaluate Hardy's theory of human reality as it is reflected in his poems in the light of existential philosophy, I have divided the thesis into seven chapters. Similarly, I have studied all of Hardy's works as well as the philosophy of existence in order to show Hardy's view of human existence in a new perspective.

The ethic of existence which tries to devise various ways and means for man's attainment of self-realization and its (existentialism's) basic tenets are detailed in the second chapter. Likewise, the standpoint of each existentialist thinker is also explained in order to
bring out the growth and development of existentialism in modern ways of life.

Man is a part of his biological environment. However, his success or failure is based on his mode of relationship with Nature. If he lives in perfect harmony with Nature, he succeeds in attaining transcendental bliss, otherwise he fails. This aspect of Man-Nature' relationships is elaborated in the third chapter.

Similarly, man is a social animal. He cannot live without the sunny atmosphere of his kith and kin and the dear ones. Nevertheless, man's success or failure to attain self-realization is based on the mode of his relationship with society. This is shown in the fourth chapter.

Man aspires to become an authentic individual. He tries to lead a social life, but the social codes may prevent him from achieving life-loyalties. Subsequently, he alienates himself from the society and remains in solitude. However, his loneliness and dread cannot help him gain self-realization, instead they make him a split-personality. This aspect of human existence in solitude is portrayed in the fifth chapter.

Man's loneliness, dread and despair discourage his existence. As a result, he desires to adjust himself with biological environment and society in such a way that, it does not disrupt his individuality. Similarly, he does not
believe in the benevolence of religion and God, as they often tend to hinder his path of progress and enlightenment. He also defies traditional values and authority with a view to create a new order of life through which he hopes to attain self-realization. This is elaborated in the sixth chapter. The conclusions about Hardy’s theory of human reality, his opinion of ‘Man-Nature’ and ‘Man-Society’ relationships, and his message of life are detailed in the seventh chapter.