CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
1.1 Preliminaries

The purpose of the present research is to study the selected novels of Thomas Hardy by applying the principles of sociolinguistics. Since sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to its society, the selected novels will be examined against the backdrop of the socio-cultural context existing at the time when these novels were being written. This chapter serves as the general introduction to the thesis as a whole. In the beginning of the chapter an effort is made to state the aims and objectives of the study. It also justifies the rationale and significance of the study, scope and limitations, selection of the author and his novels. Then, the chapter throws light on the life and works of Thomas Hardy. It discusses in detail the novelist's philosophy of life, his major works and the nature of the society in which he lived i.e. late Victorian England (1840-1920). The Victorian Age is remembered for many things. There was an extreme growth in many fields of the arts but the one that is more memorable is its literature. The authors of that time questioned many of the issues going on and influenced the society, as we know it today. The authors such as Charles Dickens and
Thomas Hardy spoke out against certain issues during that age and are very memorable for that. The chapter clearly spells out the methodology and techniques to be used towards the end of the chapter.

1.2 Aim and Objectives
Following are the aims and objectives of the present study:
1. To examine and analyse the sociolinguistic aspects of five selected novels of Thomas Hardy

2. To study and analyse the effects of social and regional dialects in Hardy’s selected novels

3. To highlight the plight of the working class people

4. To critically analyse the main characters against their socio-cultural background

5. To examine and analyse the use of language in general and the dialect in particular

6. To make the comparative evaluation of the major and minor characters by juxtaposing them

7. To study critically the social dialects and the regional dialects of the characters taking into account the socio-cultural factors
8. To add a new link to the chain of research work done on sociolinguistic approach, in general, and dialects, in particular

1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The present study is an attempt to apply the sociolinguistic approach to the five novels of Thomas Hardy. Sociolinguistic approach is one of the various approaches which analyses and interprets literature. Sociolinguistic approach applies to the study of the relationship between language and society. As continuously social changes take place in society, literature is bound to mirror it. Further, as literature is like all art forms, a social product, it studies the social system in which it is created. This study is an attempt to add a new link to the chain of research work done on sociolinguistic approach in general and dialects in particular. Generally, dialect is associated with a specific geographical region. However, social class within the geographical region also has its own dialect. In fact, it is a lesser type of language. A dialect of a language has certain associations with an individual, social class and a regional impact. One comes across the typical idiolects and sociolects in the novels of Thomas Hardy, which are worth studying from the point of sociolinguistics.

The sociolinguistic approach enhances the enjoyment of reading of the novel by encouraging readers to discover the hidden agenda. Hardy makes a linguistic experiment against the backdrop of the social reality existed in his times. The contextual information and
evidences presented in the novel are embedded in the structural design. The use of language made by the characters of Hardy is interesting and appealing. Therefore, the linguistic utterances of the characters are worth studying from sociolinguistic point of view. Moreover, they make the readers aware of the socio-cultural aspects of the life reflected in the novels and enhance their ability to understand, interpret and appreciate the fictional works in general and novels in particular.

1.4 Scope and Limitations
In the Victorian period, the novel became the dominant form of literature since the novels were commonly read aloud in family gatherings. Therefore, the novelists were very careful in choosing their topics and only selected the topics that were appropriate for the entire family. Most of the readers wanted the novelists to enlighten them. Much of the Victorian literature has a positive, eager or earnest response to the innovations of life in the 19th century.

One of the remarkable characteristic features of Hardy’s writing is that he is a meditative story-teller, a romancer and a great painter of nature. He is very realistic in portraying his characters. His heroes and heroines are all vividly and realistically depicted. Hardy’s characters have a fascinating ambiguity: they are victimized by a stern moral code, but they are also selfish and weak-willed creatures who bring on much of their own difficulties through their own vacillations and submissions to impulse. All works of Hardy are
noted for the rustic dialect and a poetic flavour which fits well into their perfectly designed architectural structures. His pessimistic philosophy seems to show that mankind is subjected to the rule of some hostile and mysterious fate, which brings misfortune to human life. The outside nature is shown as mysterious supernatural force, uncaring to the individual’s will, hopes, passion, or suffering. It likes to play practical jokes upon human beings by producing a series of mistimed actions and unfortunate coincidences. Man proves impotent before Fate, however he tries, and he seldom escapes his ordained destiny. Most of the writers of the 19th century England were critical realists who not only portrayed the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes but also showed profound sympathy for the working-class people who formed the part of their fictional works. The critical realists described with much intensity and imaginative skill the chief peculiarity of the English society, criticized the capitalist system from a democratic viewpoint and delineated the crying contradictions of the social reality of the age.

The present study is mainly confined to the five selected novels of Thomas Hardy. These are Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the D’Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. Since the sociolinguistic approach is an effective tool to reveal the social nature of the characters of Thomas Hardy, an effort will be to analyse the selected texts. While analyzing the categorical selected texts other useful and related approaches will be taken into account. The study
is limited to the dialects used in the novels under consideration. Like a scientist, the author embarks on methodical description of the chosen topic, presents clinically tangible evidence and judiciously pronounces scholarly judgment with the help of language. Therefore, a sociolinguistic approach to novels can lead from a linguistic background to a richer appreciation of how a text works.

1.5 Selection of the Author and his Novels
Thomas Hardy is a world famous writer. He has written many novels based on the theme of marriage, life and death, the struggle of poor people for existence etc. Theme, then, is neither a clichéd moral nor a framework on which to hang the other elements of the work; rather, it arises naturally from an interaction of all the other elements of the work: characters, setting, conflict, atmosphere, imagery, symbolism and even narrative perspective. In brief, then, theme must be a statement with a complete subject and predicate, and it must be a generalization about life or human nature that is clearly supported by the text and that contains the unifying and central concept of the work.

Hardy’s themes are varied in nature. His stories take into consideration the events of life and their effects. The central theme of the novel _The Mayor of Casterbridge_ may be as enigmatic as anything is possible at the hands of destiny. The main characters of this novel- Henchard, his wife Susan and daughter Elizabeth display
almost all the features associated with the classic alcoholic family. Henchard, the alcoholic, suffers from many of the accompanying afflictions: "self-will run riot," low self-esteem, shame, guilt, self-castigation, self-punishment, loneliness, a death wish, and a tendency to depression. In his interactions with people he is often impulsive, unprincipled, quarrelsome, blaming, controlling, and verbally and emotionally abusive. In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Thomas Hardy also attempted to make Victorian society more aware of its treatment of and attitudes towards women. Fate plays a big role as the thematic basis for many of his novels. Characters are constantly encountering crossroads, which are symbolic of a point of opportunity and transition. Again, in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, there are a number of themes, but a single unifying principle of (or observation about) human existence emerges from the relationships of the principal characters. He paints a vivid picture of rural life in the 19th century, with all its joys and suffering, a fatalistic world full of superstition and injustice. His heroes and heroines are often alienated from society and rarely become readmitted into it. He tends to emphasise the impersonal and, generally, negative powers of fate over the mainly working class people he represented in his novels. Hardy exhibits in his books elemental passion, deep instinct, the human will struggling against fatal and ill-comprehended laws, a victim also of unforeseeable change. Hardy makes the use of typical language to describe his characters, places and the incidents. The kind of language his characters employ makes his novels worth studying from the point of view of sociolinguistics.
1.6 Making of Hardy 1840 - 1928

It is necessary to study the biographical aspects of Hardy's life prior to discussing his time and his works. It is useful to discuss the details of his life from his childhood until his death—or what has been colloquially called ‘cradle to grave.’ Therefore, an attempt is made to compile a few facts about the life and times of Thomas Hardy. His philosophy is to be understood before making an in-depth sociolinguistic study of his novels.

Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840 in Dorset. It was three miles from the country town of Dorchester which was located in the South West of England. His family was poor, but Hardy grew up with the sense of hierarchy that was strong in the rural community. His mother was more conscious of status than his father was and was anxious that her son should do well in life. Thomas Hardy went first to the village school and then to a school of Dorchester. All of his education came from the books he found in Dorchester. He learned French, German, and Latin by himself from these books.

After completing his education at school, at sixteen, Hardy worked as apprentice to a Dorchester architect John Hicks who was a good master, sensible and kind, and a well-educated man. Under Hicks’ protection, Hardy learned much about architectural drawing and restoring old houses and churches. He loved the apprenticeship because it allowed him to learn the histories of the houses and the families that lived there. Despite his work, Hardy did not forget his
academics. In the evenings, he would study with the Greek scholar, Horace Moule, one who had the profoundest influence upon his mind and his spiritual development. Horace Moule was older than Hardy, a classical scholar of Queens’ College, Cambridge. Hardy also met another scholar, Henry Barstow, and continued intellectual discussions including infant baptism, which later inspired Sorrow’s baptism in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. As an adolescent, he became acquainted with the poet William Barnes who lived in Dorset. Hardy was greatly influenced by Barnes.

Illustration 1: Thomas Hardy
When Hardy was 22 years old, he moved to London. He was an assistant to Arthur Bloomfield in designing church restoration in his stay at London. Then, he started writing poetry about rural life. In 1867, he left London for the family in Dorset, and worked for a short time with Hicks in Dorchester. Failing to secure a niche for his poetry, he turned to fiction. His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, was written in 1868; but many publishers refused the book and he destroyed the manuscript. Writer and critic George Meredith encouraged him and he wrote a second novel which was ‘entirely action’. The title was *Desperate Remedies* (1871). *Desperate Remedies* was about murder and suicide. It basically emphasised emotional and sexual repression and the relationship between a Cytherea Graye and Aeneas Manston. This novel was followed by *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a pastoral romance, in 1872, and *Pair of Blue Eyes* in 1873.

Hardy had the firsthand knowledge of the economic hardships suffered by rural women and their pragmatic attitude to sexual relationships, coupled with his friendship with cultured women in London. It encouraged the development of strikingly unconventional conceptions of women and sexuality in his novels e.g. Sue Bridehead.

Gibson remarks in *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (1999) that even the first edition of *Greenwood Tree* did not sell very easily. However, Hardy began to gain recognition as a
novelist. His first book that gained notice was *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). After its success, he devoted himself entirely to writing and produced a series of novels among them prominent are *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy’s success with *Far From the Madding Crowd* influenced the plot of *The Return of the Native*. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, published in 1891, came into conflict with Victorian morality. In particular, the society objected to the sub-heading *A Pure Woman*. They could not agree that Tess was pure and honest, though Hardy took pains to establish in the course of narrative, what he says in the sub-title namely that Tess is a pure woman. Hardy’s next novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), aroused even more debate. The story dramatized the conflict between carnal and spiritual life. It criticised the institutions of marriage, the church and England class system. Therefore, Hardy was attacked by press as decadent, indecent and degenerate. His wife also took *Jude the Obscure* as anti-religious. She considered it as a blow to the devoutness she believed she shared with her husband. It is said that these last two novels were deemed both obscene and immoral.

In 1896 disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy declared that he would never write fiction again. He returned to the composition of poetry- his first literary love which he felt would afford him great artistic and intellectual
freedom. During the last years of his life, he wrote several collections of poems. His first volume of verse- *Wessex Poems* appeared in 1898. It was followed by *Poems of the Past and Present* (1902). His gigantic panorama of the Napoleonic Wars, *The Dynasts* was composed between 1903 and 1908. It was mostly in blank verse. *Times’s Laughingstocks and Other Verses* was published in 1909. Hardy succeeded on the death of his friend George Meredith to the presidency of the Society of Authors in 1909. *King George V* conferred on him the Order of Merit in 1910 and he received the gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature in 1912.

He wrote *Satires of Circumstance* and *Moments of Vision* during the era of the World War I (1915). The war had its effect upon him, as it had on T.S. Eliot, who was in London at the time. However, the best known poem of Hardy’s career, an epic masterpiece which was completed in 1909, was *The Dynasts*. Notes concerning this piece suggest that in addition to chronicling Britain’s role in the Napoleonic War, it expressed Hardy’s philosophical bent; a mysterious term appeared in the work - ‘phantom intelligences.’ Hardy’s last book published in his lifetime was *Human Shows* (1925). During 1920 and 1927 Hardy worked on his autobiography, which was disguised as the work of Florence Hardy. It appeared in two volumes in 1928 and 1930 respectively. At the turn of 1928, Thomas Hardy died at a ripe old age. After his death, Florence published Hardy’s autobiography in two parts under her own name.
Hardy had no children but his marriages were extremely significant factors in his life. They had a strong effect on his literary works. Several times he was in love. He was engaged once to Eliza Nicholls before meeting Emma Gifford, his first wife. Hardy met Emma in 1870 and married her in 1874. Her family didn’t like the marriage and considered Hardy inferior to Emma. Their married life was unhappy. But it continued until her death in 1912. Throughout his life, Hardy became infatuated with seemingly unattainable women. A relationship was developed between Mrs. Florence Henniker and Hardy as she greatly influenced him. After Emma’s death, Hardy married Florence Dugdale who had been his secretary and literary aide for several years. This second marriage proved happier.

After a long and highly successful life, Hardy died in Dorchester on January 11th, 1928, at the age of 87. His ashes were cremated in Dorchester and buried with impressive ceremonies in the Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey.

1.6.1 Hardy’s Philosophy

Thomas Hardy’s philosophy of life found itself at odds with the unfounded optimism of the Anglican Church of his lifetime. He was a die-hard realist both in life and in work. The attitude of the church at that time, and for many years, was “God is in His heaven; all is right with the world.”
‘Hardy held that there was no active intelligence, no just and loving God, behind human destiny but that Creation was swayed by an unconscious mechanical force, sightless, dumb, mindless and equally indifferent to either the sufferings or the joys of mankind.’

As the researcher has pointed out, since “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the outlook has bordered between ‘cruel and emotionless fate” and (karmic) retribution. Karmic retribution is not a really new concept; nor is it the concept of only one religion. Frequently interpreted as “retribution of past actions,” it has been explained by all established faiths and many writers have borrowed it. To the same extent, Thomas Hardy had also insinuated at retribution. His major characters demonstrate this belief: Gabriel Oak becomes careless and loses his flock, forcing him to look for work; yet, his intelligence and industry leads him to a high position for Bathsheba Everdene, whom he finally marries. Michael Henchard pays for the sale of his wife, Susan and their daughter; but he develops into a true “man of character.” He stops drinking alcohol for twenty years and becomes a Mayor of the town, caring for the elderly and the destitute; he wisely seeks the advice of Farfrae and uses him. But his ignorance leads him to fail in business and he turns to Farfrae, who accepts him as a servant. *Jude the Obscure* is the tragedy of unfulfilled aims due to Jude’s own weaknesses.
When considered at this juncture, it is hardly the working of a cruel and unjust fate; nor is “all right with the world.” Rather the resulting actions are portrayed as the result of past actions of the characters themselves. If it were truly left to fate, then regardless of the nature of the action, fate would either bestow blessings or crush the characters mercilessly. Each of Hardy’s major characters suffers or develops due to past actions of their weaknesses. Thus, Hardy’s philosophy had a great effect on his fictional works.

1.6.2 Hardy’s Works

Beginning with Desperate Remedies in 1871 and ending with Jude the Obscure in 1895, all his best novels are set in the area he calls “Wessex”, the South West of England. For Thomas Hardy, milieu was very significant. Hardy’s social milieu at the time of his novels ranged from cultivated farmland [such as Casterbridge] to endless, inhospitable heath [Egdon]; and the plot of the novels divided between stages as well as by the location of the characters at some time.

Though Hardy wrote poetry, it was not recognised. His first famous novel Far From the Madding Crowd received favourable review and encouraged him to write The Return of the Native, Tess of the D’Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure were ill-met.

Architect John Hick’s office and amiable nature allowed Hardy to study and compose poetry. Furthermore, it affected Hardy to the
extent that the heroes of his first three works, *Desperate Remedies*, *Pair of Blue Eyes* and *The Laodicean* were architects. Equally influential was Horace Moule, who became a close friend of Hardy. Moule was a reviewer and essayist and supported Hardy’s aim to be a writer. Moule presented copies of several books including the controversial *On the Origin of Species* (Darwin) to Hardy. The book changed Hardy’s views on men. Henry Knight in *Pair of Blue Eyes* and an intellectual Clare in *Tess* are modelled on Horace Moule.

Hardy’s stint in London, under the patronage of Arthur Blomfield, another architect, led to Hardy visiting art galleries. He was seriously influenced by Holman Hunt’s portrait of Jesus with a lantern, titled ‘Light of the World’ and at one point in *Far From the Madding Crowd* he has depicted Gabriel Oak standing in similar fashion with a lantern. However, his mother Jemima and John Stuart Mill’s ‘Subjection of Women’ (1869) proved very influential. The latter led to Hardy’s defense of women, repudiation of strict male-oriented marriage and divorce laws and the unfair treatment of women. Indubitably, Hardy was influenced by his mother as characters based upon her appeared in Hardy’s later works. John Stuart Mill and, perhaps to some extent Charles Darwin, had influenced Hardy’s characterization of Sue Bridehead.

Hardy was substantially influenced by rural superstitions and so the weather prophet entered into *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Eustacia Vye was conceived as a witch in the original text. But in the final edition, Johnny Nunsuch and his mother Susan suspect her and stab
her in the church to determine the truth. In an interview with William Archer (1901), Hardy spoke of witchcraft and superstitions still being practised:

*William Archer (WA):* Now tell me, as to rural superstitions—belief in witchcraft and so forth—are they dying out?

*Hardy:* On the surface, yes; in reality, no. People smile and say ‘Of course we don’t believe in these things’—but their skepticism is only skin deep. You will find women will make an image of some enemy and either melt it before the fire or stick pins into it. The belief in the evil eye subsists in full force.³

Many writers, besides Archer, visited Hardy. Gibson reveals the various encounters, some at Max Gate, which became a shrine for new talent; others were outdoors.

Many characters of Hardy’s novels are aware of education and class in a society. The most significant among them are Jude Fawley and Clym Yeobright. Williams remarks that in the migrant group in society, ‘culture and affluence come to be recognised as alternative aims, at whatever the cost to both, and the wry recognition that the latter will always be the first choice, in any real history.’⁴ The relationship between a migrant and his former companions is
complicated thus; he acts in ways unaccepted by his group. This is borne out in *The Return of the Native* by Mrs. Yeobright’s criticism:

> ‘After all the trouble that has been taken to give you a start, and when there is nothing to do but keep straight on towards affluence, you say you...it disturbs me, Clym, to find you have come with such thoughts...’

Hardy was thinking very seriously about writing as a career while in London between 1862 and 1867. He once met Charles Dickens in London. Dickens was among the many writers of the period who was writing about the effects of the Industrial Revolution upon the inhabitants of London. Disgruntled after years of controversy dogged his novels, Hardy returned to poetry, his preferred form, quite late, with *Wessex Poems* in 1898.

Tess was spreading its influence throughout Europe and Asia as well as the English speaking colonies such as America; translations of it appeared too. Prior to concluding the criticism of Hardy’s works, it would be worthwhile to add noteworthy commentary of his art from Lionel Johnson (1894). The comment is as follows:

> ‘He chooses to present the play of life, tragic and comic, first of all, in a definite tract or county of England... Secondly, he takes for his chief characters, men of powerful natures, men of the country, men of little acquired virtue in mind or soul; but men
disciplined by the facts and by the necessities of life, as a primitive experience manifests them. Thirdly he surrounds them with men of the same origin and class, but men of strongly less marked a power, of less finely touched a spirit: the rank and file of country labour. Fourthly, he brings his few men of that stronger and finer nature, his rustic heroes, into contact and into contrast with a few men, commonly their superiors in education, and sometimes in position, but their inferiors in strength and fineness of nature. Fifthly, he makes this contact and this contrast most effective, through the passion of love; to which end, he brings upon the scene women of various natures: less plainly marked in character than the men; for the most part, nearer to the flashy prigs and pretty fellows in outward sentiment, fashion and culture; but nearer to the stronger and finer men, in the depths of their souls.⁶

While commenting on the work of Hardy, Lawrence describes ‘typical characters’ like Michael Henchard, Jude Fawley, Tess Durbeyfield etc. as ‘aristocrats and individuals,’ and ‘against the mass.’ Lawrence defined them as the ‘individualist’ as ‘a man of distinct being, who must act in his own particular way to fulfill his own individual nature’ rather than a selfish, greedy person.⁷
At first he published anonymously, but when people became interested in his works, he began to use his own name. Like Dickens, Hardy’s novels were published in serial forms in magazines that were popular in both England and America.

Over the years, Hardy had divided his time between his home Max Gate in Dorchester and his lodgings in London. In his later years, he remained in Dorchester to focus completely on his poetry. In 1898, he saw his dream of becoming a poet and realised it with the publication of Wessex Poems. He then turned his attention to an epic drama in verse, *The Dynasts*; it was finally completed in 1908. Before his death, he had written over 800 poems, many of them published while he was in his eighties. In the last two decades of his life, he had achieved fame as great as Dickens’ fame. In 1910, he was awarded the Order of Merit. New readers had also discovered his novels by the publication of the Wessex Editions, the definitive versions of all Hardy’s early works. As a result, Max Gate became a literary shrine.

Late Victorian fiction is dominated by two major writers—Henry James, an American expatriate who lived in England for twenty years, and Thomas Hardy. But Hardy’s fiction cannot be replaced easily. He is not the same as the realistic writers such as George Eliot or Anthony Trollope, or the type like Sir Walter Scott. Although he did match Scott’s feeling for natural settings. His
novels, at some point, reflect the eighteenth century but lack the optimism of that period. "Hardy is very much his own man."

In fact, many recent critics have felt that readers have tended to ignore the extent to which Hardy is a social novelist, concerned with vital issues of the day, such as working-class education, agricultural conditions, the marriage laws, and so on. It is true that Hardy touches on these things, and many more. The trouble is, that one never gets the sense that he believes that reform in these areas will improve the human condition more than fractionally.⁸

Like many other male Victorian authors of the late 19th/early 20th centuries, Thomas Hardy tended to portray his male and female characters differently, instilling a sense of helplessness and overall lesser value in the women based on his real-life experiences with the female gender, as can be examined in two of his most renowned works, *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The typical Thomas Hardy plot places a female protagonist in a love triangle with two male protagonists who are portrayed as opposites. In the former, we see Eustacia Vye in a triangle with both Damon Wildeve and Clym Yeobright; in the latter, it is Tess with Angel Clare and Alec D'Urberville. The male protagonists here are quite at polar opposites to each other. Hardy’s female characters are repeatedly depicted as the centre of their novel’s fictional world. It may seem that Hardy was a sexist and had little regard for the importance of women, while in actuality, just the opposite is true. When writing about women, Hardy took a keener interest and
created beloved, tender characters, such as Tess Durbeyfield and Eustacia Vye. Hardy’s society is the next point of consideration.

1.6.3 Hardy’s Society – Late Victorian England 1840-1920

England changed during this period from an essentially agrarian nation to the wealthiest industrial and imperialist power in the world, but the shift was attended by massive poverty and attendant social problems: rapid urbanization, disease, filth and pollution, a high mortality rate, illiteracy, immoderation, unrest and repression. While civil society in urban London was changing rapidly in the period of his life, Thomas Hardy remained entrenched in rural Dorset. Hardy returned to Dorset with the impression that his creative powers were “going to waste” in London. “He was drawn back irresistibly in 1881 as he felt his creative powers atrophying in London.”

In 1851 London had opened a Great Exhibition at the Hyde Park Crystal Palace under Prince Albert’s suggestion. The French had criticised London as somber and this supposedly led to the exhibition. The Crystal Palace has been compared to two famous Roman Cathedrals: St. Paul’s and St. Peter’s.

In the 19th Century, Britain was beginning to “shrink” from overpopulation. In Hardy’s day, the total British Isles, including Scotland, Wales, and also Ireland had totally 21 million people in 1851. By 1901, it increased to 38 million.
In 1840 began ‘Railway Mania’ throughout Britain but it had not reached Dorset at that time. Rail carriages had been allotted for the poor and middle class, and ‘third class’ accommodation-- i.e. poor passengers seats--were “used by three quarters of all who traveled by rail” in 1875. The railway also brought the market of American grains and caused trouble for British producers.

The opening of the Underground in 1863, which preceded the death of Charles Dickens, began with the Metropolitan line. The railway’s influence on Thomas Hardy can be seen in ‘A Laodicean’ through the effect of a passing train on the leading characters. The Postal service became more efficient as a result of the railway; letters and packages could be dispatched quickly. The General Post Office (GPO) had assumed control of the telegraph and the telephone was used widely by 1870. In the following decade, bicycles also became popular—even among women. Hardy and his companion, Emma Gifford, frequently rode bicycles.

It is reported that while these hectic changes were taking place nationwide, the countryside to some extent withered. In England and Wales in 1801, approximately 65% of the population lived and worked in the countryside and the rest in town and cities. By the end of century, the figures were reversed. This has been called ‘urban migration’ or exodus to the city. Economic dirth, unemployment and poverty were reasons of it. The Victorian period saw an explosion in the number of great novelists-Dickens,
Thackeray, Trollope, Gissing, Meredith, the Brontes, Gaskell, Eliot, Hardy, Schreiner, Moore, Grand—and in novels which combined social and psychological analysis. The working class life became a subject for many writers, including Charles Dickens (Hard Times, 1854). Urban problems induced Parliament to issue Factory Acts, to regulate conditions and Public Health Acts. Rural labourers were poor, lacking basic amenities. However, this would be partly alleviated by 1914. Furthermore, agricultural yield depended upon uncertain weather. Hardy’s Dorset offered very low wages—seven shillings and sixpence per week, in 1850. It was lower than the common minimum labour wage of the time. By 1872, the trade union arose and incurred a small increase in wages.

The Britain of Queen Victoria witnessed many social changes, including the rise of women’s rights, and several serious problems. Urbanization led to a decline of the moral and social values and a replacement of them by commercialization. What followed has been referred to by the church as ‘blind worship of Mammon.’ (Mammon was the pagan god of wealth.) Nobility became equated with the acquisition of wealth. Human relationships were formed upon financial status.

The urban communities were crowded with dirty slums and inhuman living conditions. Children received either little or no care, and were exposed to epidemics. The false prestige became the theme of William Thackeray’s Vanity Fair. Municipal reforms had
their bright side; they reduced the mortality rate and added material value. Town planning was shockingly absent in Victorian urban life. Children could only play at school or in the street in the larger cities—especially London. For example, *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, Oliver meets Fagin and Bill Sykes. The former is a professional pickpocket who teaches street children the method of picking pockets; the latter is a burglar who later uses Oliver to break into houses. David of *David Copperfield* also works at the plant of his stepfather Micawber.

Victorian England saw the rise of ‘capitalists’ and ‘labourers’ as two rival organizations in modern perspective and the Limited Liability Company replaced traditional family businesses with a hierarchy of paid managers. Shareholders increased in number but had no knowledge of the lives and needs of the workers. This development led to Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*.

Prior to their emancipation, women were generally ‘confined to the four walls of their homes’—i.e., they were domesticated like livestock. Oddly, writers and poets like Tennyson glorified this attitude. The Christian Socialists like F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley took a lot of pains for women’s higher education. Later, the spread of education and democracy lead to the liberation of women. However, the right to vote would not come until the first ten years of the next century (1900-1910). By 1906, women’s suffrage became a political cause. The entrance of educated advocates, including women like Pethick Lawrence, turned the
campaign into a violent struggle. Universal franchise (voting rights) appeared by 1920.

Victorian society and the established church was viewing men as superior to women (an attitude which is entrenched in most Asian societies even today) and thereby unwilling to accept women’s real equality. Like many male Victorian novelists, Thomas Hardy tended to portray his female characters by instilling in them a sense of helplessness. His heroines were at the centre of the love triangle between two opposing male characters- the protagonist and antagonist-in his works; e.g. Tess-Alec-Angel, or Sue-Richard-Jude.

Men and women’s attitude towards love and sexuality was different in Victorian society. A woman in love surrenders her mind and body to her lover unreservedly; whereas a man sees the matter differently. Social education dictates that a man views a woman as passive, submissive and an object of his lust and his fancy. Arguably, that is a rather slanted and narrow estimate of a woman’s nature. Hardy’s woman has total freedom of choice about which man she will marry but ‘she consistently makes the wrong choice, leading to a bad marriage and disastrous sexual relationships.’

As the reader discovers through the course of the novels, Bathsheba ‘should choose Gabriel Oak’ and finally does, after she has learned a lesson from Frank Troy; likewise, Sue Bridehead should have stayed with Jude. Tess Durbeyfield should have chosen Angel
Clare. According to the ‘reality’ of Hardy’s fiction, they did not and they finally regretted it.

Hardy’s genius portrayed the change in character and temperament of women of his society. Eustacia Vye, Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead are the best examples of it. Hardy wrote that he was attracted to such modern women. Hardy created his proto-feminist characters such as Tess Durbeyfield and Sue Bridehead, who had the intelligence and strength to resist unwanted (male) attention.

Social change in England saw the development of movements like the Fabians, which believed in ‘social Darwinism.’ Social Darwinism is a concept of social development and improvement based upon Darwin’s theory of evolution. Reputably, the playwright George Bernard Shaw was a member.

By the year 1900, England had an empire of three hundred and seventy million people. British made colonies in India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaysia, Singapore and in some Southern African states. People of these countries were mistreated and exploited. Until the Boer War, the British thrived at the expense of the colonies due to cheap raw material and markets for finished products. Revolt in the colonies in Asia and Africa led British citizens to re-evaluate the role of colonial ruler during that time. This was to culminate in the Indian Independence in 1947 and the expulsion of the Raj. The
Britain of Thomas Hardy also witnessed the rise of Bismarck in Germany and the potential threat of the German Armed Forces.

In addition, technological changes affected the publishing industry. A press centred on periodical journalism arose and non-fiction developed alongside fiction as a genre. Furthermore, the Victorian poets began to publish first in such journals. Printing and printing presses became very commercial; books, magazines and daily papers (newspapers) were many and very cheap. But it affected the quality of literature. The novel of Victorian period reflected social realism and the place of protagonist in it. Hardy selected outstanding personages in his acquaintance, as well as himself, as models for his characters. Until today, a writer has been recommended to publish through such a medium before ‘striking out on his own’ with a novel.

This period in English history saw a rise of the autobiography, such as that written by Mill or Darwin; and autobiographical style in other genres, such as in Eliot’s “Mill on the Floss” and “In Memoriam.” Poetry was varied in meter and diction, and viewed the romantic core of their subjects in more realistic mode. Poet frequently looked at the past or the future, and combined irony, emotion and sympathy.

Before the onset of the 19th Century, sentimentalism and gothic style were popular in English novels- e.g., Jane Eyre. This was
followed by a historical outlook, such as Sir Walter Scott’s preoccupation with chivalry and knighthood (Ivanhoe) and Robin Hood. [Robin Hood was a Saxon noble whose lands were confiscated by the Norman gentry.] Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, John Galsworthy’s *Upstairs, Downstairs*, and many others were about the divide between the gentry (‘upstairs’) and the servants or lower classes (‘downstairs’).

Hardy’s sentimentality about the countryside was partly inspired by William Wordsworth, one of the first Romantics who viewed city life as vile. The novels of that time may had been too idealistic in their nostalgia, representing a rural pastoral beyond the ground realities of the period. Furthermore, they echoed Wordsworth’s sentiment about the city, chiefly London.

Other issues and problems arose in that period. Women’s rights and repudiation of patriarchal authority broke the whole pattern of authoritarianism. The period just after the World War I saw authority ‘dethroned.’ People no longer complacently accepted the dictates of those in power. All forms of authority were viewed with skepticism and suspicion. Particularly in the war years (1914-1918) many persons in power were found to be incompetent and their subordinates and juniors revolted against them. It led to the flouting of authority from home to office.
Human behaviour was viewed differently following the theories of noted psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud analysed the influence of the subconscious mind on human behaviour. Among such aberrations of psychology were the concepts that daughters and fathers, mothers and sons had affinity with each other. This was analysed as arising from repressed sex instincts. Such an idea as the Oedipus complex influenced D.H. Lawrence to write *Sons and Lovers*.

The Victorian Age has been termed the ‘age of anxiety.’ Because of the established political order, and religious orthodoxy, guaranteed social security with the onslaught of labour laws, rapid spread of education and new democratic ideals, science and improvements in transport and communications, the prevailing security collapsed.

1.6.4 Hardy as the Countryman

Hardy was a great regional novelist. He wrote exclusively about his home turf of Dorset, the region which lay at the heart of Wessex, where most of his novels set. He also wrote of London and Oxford (Christminster) but not as extensively as Williams remarked about Wessex: ‘it had its own culture, its own traditions, even its own language, in a sense.’ It was a very remote and old fashioned country. Tradition lingered for a long time in this area. Accordingly, the five novels studied herein have a common theme: that is of agriculture. That is the main occupation of the people about whom Hardy has written in the novels.
Hardy has presented his concepts through the play of life in a tract of countryside. His protagonists are strong-natured countrymen, disciplined by the necessities of agricultural life. He brings into relationship with them men and women from outside the rural world, better educated, superior in status, yet inferior in human worth. Such men and women are Arabella Donn, Sue Bridehead, Alec D’Urberville and Angel Clare, Phillotson, the teacher and many others.

In *The Return of the Native*, Book One, the researcher encounters a prime example of Hardy’s adaptation of provincialism:
“A fair stave, Grandfer Cantle; but I am afeard ’tis too much for the mouldy weasand of such a old man as you,” he said to the wrinkled reveller. “Dostn’t wish th’ wast three sixes again, Grandfer, as you was when you first learnt to sing it?” (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, p.25)

Note the peculiar vocabulary and diction of the above quotation: stave, afeard [afraid], Dostn’t [Don’t], weasand [wizened], Grandfer [Grandfather], etc. The terms in brackets are a translation. As has been mentioned, Hardy was discernibly influenced by a contemporary, William Barnes, who along with other regional writers such as Elliot and the Bronte sisters wrote the dialect onto the page directly. Barnes established the identity of the Dorset dialect among linguists and, showed its very considerable charm in his lyrical poetry, among a much wider audience. His achievement gave Hardy the confidence to articulate his own affection for the dialect in the mouths of some of his characters. Those characters were his rustics. Hardy adapted it into a more readable text. He was more reluctant than Barnes to use words which would not have been easily understood by his readers. In his book Personal Writings, Hardy attributed Wessex English to Teutonic (precursor of Germanic). The Teutons were a tribe living in Europe at the time of Julius Caesar. The attributing is recorded in Hardy’s obituary of Barnes:

“...he has shown the world that, far from being, as popularly supposed, a corruption of correct English, it
is a distinct branch of Teutonic speech, regular in declension and conjugation, and richer in many classes of words than any other tongue known to him.”

Hardy spoke of Barnes’ knowledge of languages and dialects in the Harold Orel edition of the above text as “definite and often exclusive information on whatever slightly known form of human speech might occur to the mind of his questioner, from Persian to Welsh, from the contemporary vernaculars of India to the tongues of the ancient British tribes.”

Michael Fry wrote of the relationship between Barnes and Hardy and of Hardy’s reverence of Barnes. A sample of this is Hardy’s eulogy to Barnes in the latter’s obituary:

‘William Barnes was not only a lyric writer of the ‘high order of genius,’ wrote Hardy for Barnes’ obituary, ‘but probably the most interesting link between present and past forms of life that England possessed’, a theme that is equally important, of course, to Hardy’s fiction.’

The following description appeared in the New Quarterly, October, 1879:

*These poems come with human interest and human character. The incidents are those of everyday life, cottagers’ sorrows and cottagers’ joys [...] Sun, Sky, rain, Wind, mist, snow, dawn, darkness are to him*
personal assistants and instructors, masters and acquaintances with whom comes directly into contact.¹⁹

In contradistinction to the above, Hardy has received criticism regarding use of the dialect in his fiction. As the first example sites The Return of the Native, the researcher features an example of such use of dialect:

“I bain’t afeard at all, I thank God!” said Christian strenuously. “I’m glad I bain’t, for then ’twon’t pain me...I don’t think I be afeard—or if I be I can’t help it, and I don’t deserve to suffer. I wish I was not afeard at all!” (Hardy, RN, UBSPD, pp.55-56)

Further along in the chapter, there are other signs of ‘distortion.’

“But we’ll gie ’em another song?” said Grandfer Cantle. (Ibid. p.56)

Whereas a modern reader would have trouble with Hardy’s use of dialect, prompting critics to claim “inaccuracy in the language of his peasants”,²⁰ Hardy has depicted the type of characters he was familiar with in proper vein. The second tirade was to compare him with George Eliot. We have mentioned that Eliot transferred the dialect straight to the page, like Barnes. But the researcher has
mentioned here that Hardy was more sensible and aware of his readers.

1.7 Methodology and Techniques

The material sources for this research will mainly be collected from both primary and secondary sources as follows:

1. The primary data will be collected mainly from the selected novels of Thomas Hardy. The highly marked example of speech events and speech situations involving the dialect will be examines using the principles and relevant theories of sociolinguistics.

2. The secondary data will be collected from critical analysis made by different linguistics in their articles and books regarding the language and dialects used in the selected novels of Thomas Hardy.

On the basis of the above mentioned sources, the researcher will apply the sociolinguistic approach to interpret and analyse the characters in the light of their socio-cultural background. It will analyse the linguistic features such as phonological, morphological and syntactic. For this purpose categorically selected expressions of the characters will be examined against the socio-cultural milieu of the era. There is inherent correlation between the characters’ speech and their social background. Finally, it will establish that the characters and the society in which they lived has to do with the
kind of language they used. The results of the analysis will be included in the concluding chapter.

1.8 Conclusion
In the beginning of the chapter an effort has been made to state the aims and objectives of the study. The rationale and significance of the study, scope and limitations, methodology and techniques are made clear. The reasons for the selection of the novelist and his novels have been amply made clear. In fact, this chapter lays the foundation for further inquiry into the sociolinguistic aspects of Thomas Hardy's selected novels.

The next chapter is devoted to the discussion on sociolinguistics in general and the sociolinguistic background of the novels under consideration in particular.
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