



## Pessimism: In The Novels of Thomas Hardy

DR. Sunita Trivedi

Jwala Devi Vidya Mandir P.G. College, Kanpur (U.P.), India

Received- 02.11.2018, Revised- 10.11.2018, Accepted - 15.11.2018 E-mail: aaryvrat2013@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Hardy was hypersensitive: his own life was tragic and gloomy. The gloomy effect of his age plays an important role in his writings. Doubts, despair, disbelief frustration, were the chief characteristics of that age. His pessimism is also the outcome of the impressions that he receives from life. Hardy's philosophy of the human condition is determined by his natural temper and disposition. His novels concentrate on human sufferings. Hardy's perception of human life was formed by different factors. Hardy's vision of life immensely in power from the fact. It may be true that Thomas Hardy seems more of the dark side of life than other bright side. The peasant of Thomas Hardy is the part of the land scape. His plots are full of ambition, love, greed, jealousy and more that they are psychological. He writes a moral drama, shows us a conflict of contradictory wills, guided themselves by feelings.*

**Key Words:** Pessimism, Despair, hypersensitive, Doubts, despair, disbelief frustration, pessimism.

The scholars have called Hardy the Shakespeare of English novel. His four great tragedies- Tess of the D' Aubervilliers, Jude the obscure, The Return of Native and The Mayor of Casterbridge\_ have been linked to the four great Shakespearian tragedies, however, while doing so critics seems to have omitted the fact that Hardy's conception of tragedy is radically different from that Shakespeare.

Hardy is a major Contributor of English novel. He produced many successful novels between 1860 to 1890s. His novels are genuine as they contain personal experiences. Hardy is the father of pessimistic novel. In Hardy's novel his philosophy is that men are more puppets in the hands of malicious fate. Hardy's conception of life was essentially tragic. In The Mayor of Casterbridge Elizabeth Jane says that "Happiness was but the occasional episode in general drama of pain". (1) In Jude the obscure, Phillotson speaks, "Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society." (2)

The Intellectual climate and the social and economic transformation in the nineteenth century created in Hardy a deep pessimism. Tragic coincidence and the irony of fate are deeply rooted in his vision of life. Hardy expressed his deep pessimism when he wrote about the universal order. He held both a deterministic and tragic view of human

existence. In Hardy's view tragedy is created by the blind forces of nature which man opposes in vain. As R.M. Rander pointed out, "His idea of tragedy represents a combination of Greek, Shakespearian and Biblical tragedy." (3)

Hardy's vision of life controlled by fate, blind chance, and heredity. His major fiction shows that human fiction is basically tragic because people are trapped by the law of nature. Hardy praises his tragic characters who struggled in vain. Hardy lived in an age of transition. The industrial revolution was in the process of destroying the agricultural life, it was a period when fundamental beliefs\_ religious, social, scientific and political\_ were shaken. The new philosophies failed to satisfy the emotional needs of many people. When one thinks of Hardy the novelist, the idea that comes to mind is his frequent use of chance and circumstances in the development of his plots. Fatalism is a view of life which acknowledges that all action is controlled by the nature of things, or by fate. Determinism acknowledges that man's struggle against the will. Hardy sees life in terms of action. Incident plays an important role in causing joy or pain. In Hardy's novels, fate appears as an artistic motif in a great variety of form\_ chance and coincidence, nature and convention. The use of chance and coincidence as a means of developing the plot was a technique used by many Victorian



authors but with Hardy it becomes something more than a mere device.

Fate appears in the form of nature, endowing it with varying moods that affect the lives of the characters. Hardy was not basically a philosopher. Most of his characters are drawn from common section of society. But they strike us as powerful men and woman. Hardy's method of characterization is analytical. He records the variation in his characters. He makes his characters real and actual. Hardy takes for his chief characters, men and woman of powerful natures, men of country men of little acquired virtue in mind and soul. Hardy loves to depict men and women of strength and stability. His characters are complex to some extent but they are never too subtle. Hardy has the art to analyse the way- wart motives.

His novel "The Mayor of Casterbridge" gives the impression that human existence in tragical. All things here are in process of decay. Hardy always thinks of man in relation to some unseen power that directs the activities of mortals. He calls this power by various names such as nature, fate, destiny. A struggle between man and omnipresent is Hardy's interpretation of human life. The human beings are mere puppets in the hands of omnipotent power. This led to believe at times that God is not in heaven All's wrong with the world. Hardy's tragic characters are not meek and silent but they are violent in their fight against destiny.

Hardy's tragic concept truly reveals that his pessimism is always elevating and seldom depressing. Hanchard meets his tragic end but his life, his misfortune, his valiant battle does not depress the reader. On the other hand, he leaves upon us an impression of greatness of character. There is something heroic in their struggle which inspires us and moves us to vast pity and fear. Prof. Pintos views about Hardy's conception of life may be aptly quoted.

"Such a Philosophy may be called pessimistic but Hardy's art is not that of a pessimist, what seances him from pessimism is heigh and noble conception of human nature."

Chance, mishap and accident are Hardy's favourite fictional devices. In his major fiction Hardy

illustrated his personal philosophy of chance, a belief that chance, a blind force of nature can change man's destiny. Chance is for Hardy everything for which man has no control. Tragedy occurs when the will of man clashes with chance. Chance is an indifferent force of the universe. His world was filled with chance in which men and women become its tragic victims. For Hardy chance determines life which renders it futile, the universe has no understanding for people's suffering.

Hardy's view of life is not wholly pessimistic. Hardy, like many writers before and after him was deeply concerned in his novels. Hardy's view of life is a counterbalance to both the rationalistic tradition represented by Christian humanism. As J. Hills Miller has painted out. "In Hardy's world there is no supernatural hierarchy of ideals."

"In Hardy's world there is no supernatural hierarchy of ideals or commandments, nor is there any law inherent in the physical world which says it is right to do one thing, wrong to do another, or which establishes any relative worth among things or people. Events happen as they do happen. They have neither value in themselves nor value in relation to any end beyond them. Worse yet, suffering is certain for man. In place of God there is the immanent will, and this unthinking force is sure to inflict pain on a man until he is lucky enough to die." (4)

In his fiction a poetry Hardy depicted the frailty of man in an occasionally malevolent always indifferent universe. He showed the discrepancy between human desire and destiny: His philosophical outlook was pessimistic and tragic. For Hardy man as a part of nature is subject to her physical laws and unable to change them. When man transcends his natural bondage, he may achieve personal freedom which means that he is free to make his own choices. Hardy is the father of pessimistic novel and predecessor of modern novel. In Hardy's novel his philosophy is that men and mere puppets in the hands of malicious fate. Hardy's conception of life was essentially tragic. The fact is that Hardy was a through realist. Hardy does not take a degraded view of mankind. Mankind for Hardy always assumes heroic proportions and according to him sufferings in the universal law and happiness is but an



occasional episode.

**REFERENCES**

1. The Mayor of Casterbridge: Thomas Hardy  
Macmillan Education limited, Basingstoke  
and London- 1886.
2. Jude the obstruse: Thomas Hardy, OS good,  
McIlvaine, and company-1995.

3. [Https:// thomasmolt.com](https://thomasmolt.com). Hardy  
Philosophy.
4. Thomas Hardy's Philosophical outlook. Dr.  
Andrzej Denisenko, Seminar lecture in  
English Literature and culture Warsaw  
University; Contributing Editor, Poland.

\*\*\*\*\*