

I. Introduction to Thomas Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* as a Psychological Fiction

Thomas Hardy's novel *The Well -Beloved* can well be understood as the embodiment of the Victorian societal configuration in which the women were subordinated and psychologically exploited under the construction of male dominated strata of the community. The primary objective of this study is to examine the protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston's love for three generations of women and his quest for an ideal woman. And secondary objective is to analyze the psychology or intention of the protagonist towards the women characters.

Protagonist Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor, as the ideal of patriarchal strata loves three generations of women- the grandmother, her daughter, and granddaughter. He is a sculptor in search of satisfaction, and completion in both body and soul. To fill-up his satisfaction, Pierston runs after the series of lovers claiming his true love. In the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Pierston's quest to get an ideal beloved is only to fill-up his sexual satisfaction which is beyond the consummation. For Pierston, all the women characters (lovers of Pierston) of this novel are as the object of sexual desire. In other words, in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*, presentation of the main character Jocelyn Pierston who in his entire life, searches for the 'ideal' woman flitting from woman to woman, passing through the chain of lovers in the name of his ideal love, gives mental and physical torture to them and subordinates the position of women in that for him, women are just the means of consumption by which he tries to get the maximum satisfaction.

In short, the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston moves hither and thither in the ever-renewed dance of love forever in the throes of a desire that is beyond consummation. Thus, in search of perfection, that is 'the well beloved,' Pierston becomes unable to fulfill his desire and ultimately he shifts his desire from the quest of an ideal woman

to build an ideal town at the end.

A dominant English novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy is one of the central figures in English literature. Initially an architect who had won prizes from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Association. He started writing novels and poems which idealized the rural life. Afterwards, his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, completed by 1867, was rejected from the publisher. Even though, his first attempt failed, he kept on trying to publish it following his friend's advice. Later, he destroyed the manuscript so that no copies of it exist today.

After he abandoned his first novel, Hardy wrote two new ones that he hoped would have more commercial success, *Desperate Remedies* (1871) and *Under the Green Wood Tree* (1872) which were published anonymously.

He started his dazzling literary career with the publication of a novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). His next novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) was successful enough for Hardy to give up architectural work and pursue a literary career. Over the next twenty-five years Hardy produced ten more novels which became his major works. They are *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Wessex Tale* (1888), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and so on.

Nearly, all of Hardy's important novels and stories are set in the agricultural areas or town of Dorset in Southwest England near Dorchester, the region Hardy called "Wessex." This was the area in which he grew up in the mid-1800s. In Hardy's time, Dorset was still a rural and unsophisticated area inhabited by rustic and superstitious people.

Like many Victorian writers, Hardy was troubled by a dwindling of his religious faith. Nevertheless, he frequently wrote about supernatural forces and also

read the writings of Charles Darwin and other scientists and followed some of his beliefs that a controlling force governed the universe. His lack of religious faith is reflected in the bleakness of the landscape in Wessex and the harshness of the fate that plagues many of Hardy's major characters.

Hardy's novels are still popular today largely because of their qualities and themes they deserve harmonizing with modernity. His works are deeply psychological, filled with misguided love, and closely connected with thoughts and feelings of women. All of Hardy's major works deal with unhappy relationships and several with divorce. In most of his works, major male characters have destructive nature who attempt to destruct women's desire, feelings, and emotions. In his novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the protagonist Michael Henchard deserts his family and can never quite escape the psychological guilt that plagues him throughout his life. In *The Return of the Nature*, the protagonist Eustacia Vye drowns or commits suicide as she attempts to meet her lover. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, the main characters Tess and Jude are both seduced by the wrong mates. Because of her seduction, Tess becomes the victim of sexual double standard that we might label as 'male chauvinists.' Jude's ill-fated marriage fails and he contemplates suicide. In his last novel, *The Well-Beloved*, major women characters are sexually harassed by male character Jocelyn Pierston.

As the core nature of his novel suggests, his works reflect pessimism and sense of tragedy in human life. He wrote forceful studies of life in which his characters are continually defeated in their struggle against physical and social environment and against their own impulses.

Hardy's novels also reflect the Victorian realism. They are filled with real people encountering their own weaknesses and trials. Yet for all their realism, there is

also a certain sensational quality in Hardy's novels. He wrote most of the novels in real Victorian setting with real characters. Many of his dominant novel are written on the basis of social events. So, his novel also reflects social realism. The novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved* are written on the basis of social events.

Thomas Hardy's last published novel *The Well-Beloved* (1897) is a focused dissection of one man's pursuits of individual fulfillment along two paths: love and art. The protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston is a sculptor in search of perfection in both body and soul. His life is an obsessive, involuntary chase for the permanent embodiment of the ideal female and 'the well beloved'. He has glimpses of her everywhere- on the streets, in drawing rooms, at railway stations. Pierston wants something he can hardly identify; the well-beloved is simply a phenomenon. There is such a mixture of hope and anguish in Pierston's pursuit that his wishes almost seem outside of consciousness or volition, and he often feels cursed by his desires. His life's story and so, his life's pursuit finally centers on three generations of women, youthful reincarnation of the original Avice Caro from his native Isle of Slingers, with whom he fell in love at the age of twenty. He loves the daughter of the first, Avice when he is forty, and the granddaughter when he is sixty, but time and life defeat him. Pierston never finds happiness with 'the well beloved'. At the end of the novel, he is unable to get an ideal beloved.

The novel moves around the principal character Jocelyn Pierston and his forty years quest for the incarnation of the ideal woman. To make completion of his quest, he flits from woman to woman, especially Avice Caro, his sweetheart at the age of twenty, then Avice's daughter, Anne Avice, who charms him when he is forty, and finally Avice the third, the granddaughter whom he courts at the age of sixty. Apart

from these three lovers, he also runs after two more lovers- Mercia Bencomb and Nichola Pine- Avon. To fill-up his sexual desire, he keeps physical relationship with all those lovers in the name of his true love but, in reality, they are not loved by him for the sake of marriage.

In Hardy's novel, *The Well- Beloved*, women characters realize that they are truly loved by the Protagonist Jocelyn Pierston. But, in reality, they are victimized by his false love because he only seeks to get sexual pleasure in the name of true love. The hero of the novel, Pierston is the man who seeks for his own satisfaction, completion from the women characters without considering their desires, emotions, and feelings placing himself in the topmost stage of the society. Hardy's novel, *The Well-Beloved* is filled with misguided love, and is closely concerned with the thoughts and feelings of women.

This novel tries to capture the Victorian ideology through the presentation of the male character cum sculptor Jocelyn Pierston who can be the representative of Victorian male oriented society. In such case, this novel's hilarious experimentation has pulled the critical responses in considerable length. Various critics and interpreters have analyzed this novel applying different theoretical perspectives.

Relating to the desire of the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston, critic and scholar J. Hillis Miller says:

The goal of the desire is to find that something missing, to achieve completion, to fill the gap The male (Jocelyn) wishes to complete himself or to make up for a lack by joining himself to a beloved of the opposite sex Jocelyn's desire is contradictory because its fulfillment would be his death and so not the fulfillment of the desire Between the two desires, the desire to maintain his

separateness and so keep a self which is no self and the desire to complete himself and so die as himself. (169)

Hillis Miller sees contradictoriness in the desire of the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston regarding its fulfillment which ends in death. He also argues that the source of his artistic creativity turns out not to be a positive fecundating power but an absence. He explicits that Pierston postpones the abandonment of his desire because it would mean his own death.

With regard to the aging of the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston, Critic Max Cairnduff asserts his view:

There is something tragic in his aging while his conception of the beloved does not. A man of twenty might attract a woman of twenty if their personality and charms match. A man of sixty is unlikely to be able to rely on personality and charm alone. A gay gets engaged to a girl, who runs away from him, twenty years later, he goes after her daughter, and gets rejected, another twenty years later, he goes after the granddaughter. He goes from being self-centered and thoughtless at twenty to a selfless door mat at sixty. (68)

Max's statement shows contradiction the age of Jocelyn pierston. He gets engaged to a girl Avice of his age which is quite suitable and believable. Twenty years later, he goes after her daughter that is a less believable. But, being a sixty years of the age, another twenty years later, he goes after the granddaughter that is highly unbelievable today. *The Well Beloved* is a strange tale about a successful sculptor who is fickle in love and, for his entire life, flits from woman to woman (three generations in the same family) trying to find his 'ideal beloved'.

To relate the story of the novel *The Well-Beloved* to the life of Hardy, Isa

states:

It was an absurd promise, yet Hardy came through, as he always does . The star crossed lover Jocelyn starts out an idealistic young man, yet the long, dull march of time catches up to him at the end. I can't help but think this last of Hardy's novel is a reflection of his life at old age. The conclusion is especially sobering, yet welcomed, for it seems rue, the best we can hope for in old age. (115)

Isa's above statement shows that *The Well-Beloved* can be read as a deeply personal novel that reflects Hardy's nagging preoccupations, even obsessions, at a particular phase of his life. It can be read as an investigation into his own emotional and creative predicament at this crucial juncture in his life. In his novel *The Well-Beloved*, he traces the aging process of an individual through three generations so that by the end the protagonist belongs to roughly the same age- group that Hardy himself had reached by the 1890s.

The protagonist is not just a fictional character but like Hardy himself, a creative artist, and *The Well-Beloved* is, like Thomas man's death in Venice. Jocelyn pierston is a sculptor who, like Hardy, has moved from relatively humble origins in Southwest England to become successful and affluent member of fashionable metropolitan society. With regard to the nature of the male characters, Helen Kitson explains:

This is one of Thomas Hardy's 'romances and fantasies' like *Tess of the d'Uebervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, the novel *The Well Beloved* explores the destructiveness of men's idealization of women .The differences in this novel is that the lives of the women- the 'well-be ved' do not end in tragedy. They shrug, get on with their lives, and it is

the male central character who becomes increasingly desperate and rather ridiculous as the novel progresses. (84)

By this interpretation, it is quite clear that most of Hardy's male characters have destructive nature. In his novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, it is the principal male character, Michael Henchard deserts his family. Similarly, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, the main character Tess becomes the victim of sexual double standards and is deserted by her husband. And in his last novel, *The Well-Beloved*, women characters are deceived by the protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston. Nevertheless, most of the women characters such as Avice the third, Mercia Bencomb, Nichola Pine-Avon do not spend their life in tragedy. It is the male character, Pierston who becomes despicable at the end because of unfulfillment of his desire.

In the domain of critical approaches to glance *The Well-Beloved* from the new perspective, another critic and scholar De Angelis Rose poses the issues of love, self love and the other in this novel. Regarding faultless love as a vanishing ideal, and a landscape of marble, the metamorphic form of limestone which unveils the connection between the erotic and the creative aspects of desire, he further assesses:

In Hardy's novel, the perfected image Jocelyn Pierston creates of his love of and for Avice I shape his love for her daughter Avice-II and granddaughter Avice-III. His love for them is, in fact, wholly dependent upon the vitalizing power of their remembered predecessor: and since, in a sense, the beloved is both present and absent . (99)

In this interpretation, Rose sees the protagonist Jocelyn and his lovers Avice, Anne Avice, Avice the third, Nichola Pine-Avon and Mercia Bencomb move hither and thither in the ever-renewed dance of love forever in the throes of desire that is beyond consummation. In search of perfection and completion, that is an ideal beloved,

protagonist Jocelyn Pierston becomes unable to fulfill his desire and ultimately he shifts his desire from the quest of an ideal woman to build an ideal town.

The issue of this research has been analysed from the multiple perspectives by the various domains of interpretation of the critics and scholars. Nevertheless, while viewing this text, I found this text more psychological. The writer of this novel Thomas Hardy includes various issues such as misguided love, closely concerned with the thought and feelings of women, human experience, desire, lack, loss, repression, and unconscious of the characters in the novel, *The Well-Beloved* which makes the issue psychological. In it, a sculptor Jocelyn Pierston expresses his desire the desire to get an ideal beloved which is repressed in his unconscious mind through the sculpture he himself has prepared. Before creation of the desire in his unconscious mind for the incarnation of an 'ideal woman,' Jocelyn Pierston sees the imaginary of the well-beloved in the sculpture and afterwards creates a desire to get her in real life. In the similar way, the protagonist of this fiction, Jocelyn Pierston passes through the chain of lovers that is he flits from one woman to another. It is because his unconscious mind is totally guided by the quest for an ideal beloved which also makes it psychological. Being the role model of Victorian society in terms of law, order, and morality, Jocelyn Pierston follows them in order to fulfill his 'desire' for the 'ideal woman'. He is a sculptor in search of perfection in both body and soul. His life is an obsessive and involuntary chase for the permanent embodiment of the ideal feminine, 'the well beloved'. The unconscious minds of the women characters such as Avice, Anne Avice, Avice the third, Marcia Bencomb and Nichola Pine-Avon realize that they are truly loved by Jocelyn Pierston but in reality, they are victimized by his false love. It is because he only seeks sexual pleasure from them. Thus, Hardy's novel is filled with the misguided love, and closely concerned with the thought and feeling of

women which makes this issue more psychological.

Hardy, in this novel, sketches the realistic tenets of that period. Because placing such male character, Pierston at the center of the interpretation and discussion and the female characters at the nutrients to fill- up the thirst and hunger of male character, Hardy in this novel is depicting Victorian stereotypes of suppression and exploitation which were prevalent in Victorian social structure.

The theoretical modality which I aim to apply is particularly taken from French Psycho-Feminism or French Feminism. Psychoanalysis studies human experiences which are operating in our daily life in a profound rather than superficial ways. It can help us to understand literary texts, which are about human behaviour. Themes and motifs central to psychoanalysis are desire and loss, delay, and replatoin of doubling lack, and so on.

In psychoanalysis, the 'unconscious' is the mental realm into which those aspects of mental life that are related to forbidden desires and instincts are cosigned through the process of repression. The unconscious is absolutely unknown to the 'subject' except where it exerts pressure on conscious life, as when repressed object refuses to remain repressed. The instincts and desirs it contains are usually disguised through a repressive censorship that turns forbidden ideas into different images by the process of 'condensation' and 'displacement' (In Feud's words), where they become metonymies and metaphors in Lacan's words. These censored images seek to re-enter 'consciousness' through dreams, memories, visions, day dream symptoms, and verbal and physical tics.

Jacques Lacan, a French Psychoanalyst was originally trained as psychiatrist, and in the 1930s and 1940s worked with psychotic patients. He began to develop his own version of psychoanalysis in the 1950s based on the ideas articulated in

structuralism, linguistics, and anthropology.

Lacanian psychoanalysis aims to understand the unconscious of human mind in regards with language, which he derives from the growth of infant to adulthood. Lacan divides human growth into three phases in his psychoanalysis: Imaginary, Mirror and symbolic. These three are the phases in the constitution of the psychic subject.

French feminism is similar to the term *Écriture féminine* which is the branch of Feminism. It is concerned with subjectivity, sex, sexuality and language. It disrupts the unities of western discourse pointing to its silence. It is the deconstruction of male centered thinking and takes language as the medium of women's oppression. In her famous essay "The Laugh of Medusa", Helen Cixous calls for women to put their bodies into their writing. She says, "A woman's body with its thousand and one thresholds of ordour . . . will make the old single grooved mother tongue never berate with more than one language" (qpt-in Sheldon 151). This statement amplifies a call for independence and necessity of rejecting the male way of writing.

Another French feminist, Julia Kristeva describes a mother-centered realm of expression as the semiotic as opposed to the symbolic law of the father. Lacanian critics want to theorize about women's relationship to language and signification. She opposes phallogentrism with images derived from women's corporal experiences. By questioning the overlooked femininity, she prefers to see women to have independent position in realizing necessity of the time.

It concerns feminine writing from the position of women and accept Lacan's account of language as a masculine order but does not accept his position on affirmation of masculine order as equivalent to civilization or society. The feminist thinkers like Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous question the assumption that femininity

can only be seen from the point of view of phallic culture. They are radical in nature and make deconstructive reading of society from the perspective of Derridean philosophy of center and margin.

Thomas Hardy's novel, *The Well-Beloved* shows real situation of women under the phallogentrism where females are sexually and mentally exploited. Exploitation of women is inherent tenet of malpractice of patriarchy evident in *The Well-Beloved* because it depicts the ego of masculinity in the name of 'desire' or 'imagination' of 'ideal' and 'perfection' searching for that domain in women.

The Well-Beloved is a focused dissection of one man's pursuit of individual fulfillment colored with the norms, values and perceptions of patriarchy, along two paths: love and art. The protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston is a sculptor in search of perception in both body and soul. Pierston wants something he can hardly identify; 'the well-beloved' is simply a phenomenon. There is such a mixture of hope and anguish in Pierston's pursuit that his wishes almost are outside of consciousness or volition, and he often feels cursed by his desires. His life's pursuit finally centers upon three generations of women.

So far as the outline of this research paper is concerned, the present research paper has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the objectives of the study along with the major thematic aspects of his major works, a brief critical synopsis, critical reviews of the novel *The Well-Beloved*, explanation of theoretical modality which is to be applied in the research paper, and an introductory outline of the present research itself.

On the basis of the theoretical modality of the research, in second chapter, the researcher will analyze the text in considerable length from the proposed perspective. While doing so, the researcher will sort out and include some relevant extract from

the text and theoretical concepts from French feminism and merge them which provides the most striking points to certify the proposed hypothesis as the evidences that the way women are perceived by male characters in Hardy's *The Well- Beloved*

The last part of this research is the conclusion section of the entire study. On the basis of the textual analysis in chapter two, it will conclude the explanations and arguments raised in the preceding chapters and show Hardy's presentation of male and female characters in his novel *The Well- Beloved*.

II. Quest for an Ideal Woman in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*

In Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*, presentation of the main character Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor, as the ideal of patriarchal society who in his entire life, searches for the 'ideal' woman flitting from woman to woman, subordinates the position of the woman. For him, women are just the means of consumption by which he tries to get the maximum satisfaction. The way Hardy presents the male character in his thoughtfully provocative novel, *The Well-Beloved* who rarely sees woman as individuals and as the embodiment of elusive indefinable aspects which tend to be the identity crisis of woman in Victorian society. Hardy's male characters frequently detach the women they love from their physical reality and elevate them into something ideal to be aspired. In its examination of Jocelyn Pierston's elusive quest for the physical embodiment of his feminine ideal, it casts a critical eye back over its own author's gallery of female icon and as such it is a fitting conclusion to the career of the novelist for whom women were persistent source of inspiration and fantasy in both his life and his art.

The protagonist Jocelyn Pierston is a sculptor in search of perfection in both body and soul. His life is an obsessive, involuntary chase for the permanent embodiment of the ideal feminine, 'the well beloved' which obviously sets permanent embodiment of the ideal feminine; 'the well beloved' which also sets the submissive position of women in that patriarchal society. Being the role model of Victorian society in terms of law, order and morality, Jocelyn Pierston follows them in order to fulfill his desire for the 'ideal beloved'. Since the concept of 'ideal' is also shaped with the undercurrents of patriarchy, there is no space for the freedom and autonomy of females in Victorian society which Hardy depicts in his novel, *The Well-Beloved*.

Pierston's artistic frustration is a metaphor for the frustration in his erotic life.

Initially, he attempts to shape his aesthetic ideal in stone. Later, he turns to shape it in an indigenous artisan family- the Caro to provide him an ideal woman. In this context, Lacan remarks: “One signifier relates to the another along a constantly shifting, open-ended chain” (169). Lacan means to say that man moves linguistically into the chain of signifiers and this is never ending process. Moreover, the signifiers slide over signified, which is like jellyfish. In short, signified can never be acquired. In this context, the narrator of the *The Well-Beloved*, Hardy describes the protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston’s quest for an ideal woman or his habit of flitting from woman to woman:

Though, to tell the truth, his affection for her was rather that of a friend than of a lover, and he felt by no means sure that the migratory, elusive idealization he called his love who, ever since his boyhood, had flitted from human shell to human shell an indefinite number of times, was going to take up her abode in the body of Avice Caro. (10)

The above lines clarify Pierston’s mentality of flitting from woman to woman from his boyhood. Just as he seeks to shape his aesthetic ideal in stone, he turns to an indigenous artisan family- the Caro to provide him with an embodiment of his ‘well beloved’ that migratory, elusive idealization he called his love.

In this novel, the hero Jocelyn Pierston wants to get an ideal beloved so, in this process he moves into the chain of signifiers (women) which is never ending process. It means the hero of the novel, Jocelyn Pierston tries his best to get the signified, an ideal woman spending his forty years of life but ultimately, he is unable to acquire the signified, ‘the well beloved’. He gets just the chain of signifiers.

However, Avice Caro is at first, as much a disappointment to him as his

statues because Pierston's awareness of her sexuality arrests him at the level of the physical and prevents him from achieving a 'true' consummation with the spiritual beauty that she represents. Avice becomes 'the earthly realization of his formless desire' only after death has rendered her physically inaccessible. The impossibility of consummating this desire, signified by his fantasy of her body leads out 'under the pale moon', ensures its constancy and leads him back to his native Isle of Slingers to commune with the timeless essence of his dead fiancée. He claims that in his infatuation for Avice "Flesh was absent altogether; it was loved rarefied to its highest attar" (57). By comparison with the spiritualized dead women, the living one grows proportionately fleshier. Pierston attempts to embody Avice's spirit in her daughter Anne Avice. He imprisons her in his gaze-spying on her through her cottage window and even succeeds in remaining her against her will but ultimately is unable to get her as 'the well beloved'.

Protagonist Jocelyn Pierston, in his entire life, searches for the well beloved flitting from woman to woman. In this text, his repeated use of phrase "The beloved was again embodied"(26) or "the well beloved had reappeared"(30) shows his endless or unlimited desire or quest for an ideal woman. In this regard, Andrew Michael Robert in his essay "Psychoanalysis" drawing the ideas from Lacan argues: "Desire in terms of an endless chain of signifier- just as language, in a post structuralist view, never reaches a final point of presence where signifier and signified are unified and stable. So desire is based on lack and presence. It never finds its object"(224).

Jacques Lacan and Andrew Michael Roberts see contradiction in the desire of human beings regarding its fulfillment which ends in death. They explicit that one postpones the abandonment of his desire because it would mean his own death. As Lacan argues, "One can never fulfill one's desire but this desire is repressed"(165)

and another critic Robert argues “desire is an endless chain and it never finds its object”(224). In the same way, Jocelyn Pierston in this novel sees the ‘well beloved’ in his own creation of art (sculpture) and creates a desire in his unconscious mind to achieve her in real life. But, he is unable to fill- up his desire and later that becomes a quest forever. In the text, the phrase “the well-beloved had reappeared” means protagonist Pierston sees the ‘well beloved’ in every woman. Even though he tries to get an ideal woman spending his whole life, ultimately he is unable to get her. He gets just the series of women-- one after another.

Being an artist, Pierston is a lover that is not quite the right word for his curiously chaste, even virginal infatuations. He is highly susceptible to female’s beauty and under the influence of infatuation can act with an impulsiveness verging on the comic, when he abruptly proposes to a virtual stranger, Marcia Bencomb: “My queenly darling,” he burst out, “instead of going to your aunt will you come and marry me?” (27). But it is less the woman of flesh and blood he pursue than an ideal beauty that his infatuation of the moment seems to embody.

Helene Cixous talks about male’s repression of females: “The female body, that has been repressed historically by the apparatus of male theology and philosophy, social system, and even psychoanalysis” (704). According to Cixous, female sexuality and body has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters. In the masculine culture, traditionally women’s body has been repressed by male because history has been written in male language by male. In patriarchy, women’s body has been considered as pleasure giving object for male. They only need women’s body for their pleasure because history has not been written in women language by women so they are powerless. As a result, their body has been repressed historically by male theology and social system.

In Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*, protagonist Jocelyn Pierston as a powerful man wants to get sexual satisfaction from the beauty of women. While doing so, he flits from woman to woman, subordinates the position of woman. For him, women are just the means of consumption by which he tries to get the maximum satisfaction. Dramatising such stereotypical strata of the Victorian society, Hardy, in this novel, sketches the realistic tenets of that period.

The Well-Beloved takes the ideas of men's idealization of women, and their desire to reproduce them as objects of the masculine imagination, and concentrates it into a tightly organized, almost schematic fictional discourse on the gender implication of the relationship between artist and muse. All of Hardy's appropriately male characters are implicated in this probing analysis of masculine artistic temperament as Jocelyn Pierston's painter friend Alfred Somers reassures him: "You are like other men only rather worse" (31). In this examination of Jocelyn Pierston's elusive quest for the physical embodiment of his feminine ideal, it casts a critical eye back over its own author's gallery of female icons and such is a fitting conclusion to the career of a novelist for whom women were a persistent source of fantasy in both his life and his art.

Thomas Hardy's speculation of Jocelyn Pierston as a man in retreat forms the 'new' and all its manifestation in the bourgeois urban society of London, epitomizes the Victorian nobility colored with the supremacy of patriarchy. His birth place, the Isle of Slingers, is deeply pasteurized where Pierston chooses to represent his unattainable ideal in the form of female body, but his 'Aphrodities', 'Astartes', 'Freyjas', 'Junos', 'Lilliths', 'Minervas' and 'Psyches' are popular with the general public; they fall to come alive for their creator. In short, my assertion of the point here is that with the glorification of femininity along with the attributes of goddesses, the idiosyncratic patriarchal intention to exploit, subjugate and subordinate the female

that germinates the status quo of males centered dogma.

For Lacan, “Women become ‘other’ not to be understood because she is not linked to the phallus, the woman is only understood negatively. ‘Woman’ in the position of the excluded term” (173). Lacan means to say that in the patriarchal social structure, women are considered as others. In this sense, in the text, *The Well-Beloved*, Pierston attempts to subordinate Avice II saying “[w]here have you been? he said, with almost angered concern on his face. ‘you ought not to have been absent more than ten minutes” (103). He further asserts:

‘Oh , Avice, Avice, you must not go out like this! Don’t you know that I am responsible for your safety? I am your- well, guardian, in fact, and am bound by law and morals, and I don’t know what-all, to deliver up to your native Island without a scratch or blemish. And yet you indulge in such midnight vagary as this!’(103)

This practice of patriarchy deserves in the name of law and morality to place female characters within the limitation of general principle encapsulated with the ideological signation. With such moral principles which are only for the sake of males in the society, patriarchal social practice delimits the standard of women placing them in the marginal and subordinated position equating them with the ‘other.’ According to Lacan, when women speak, when women take up subject position, it is not as women, but as imitation of males. Within the phallic definition, woman is constituted as ‘not all’. The feminine is figured as an absence within the real as well as the imaginary and symbolic orders. Thus, women have been excluded from symbolic order.

The above quoted lines also show the exclusion of women from language in the symbolic order or domination of women by masculine language. The phrase “you ought not to have been absent more that ten minutes” means the protagonist Jocelyn

Pierston attempts to get hegemony over Avice II by his powerful language. But a female character, Avice II is unable to raise the voice against Pierston because she is absent from the language. In this respect, Julia Kristeva, argues:

At the interior of this Psychosymbolic structure, women feel rejected from language and the social bond, in which they discover neither the affects nor the meaning of the relationship they enjoy with nature, their bodies, their children's bodies, another woman, or a man. The accompanying frustration, which is also experienced by some men, is the quintessence of the new feminist ideology. (97)

Here Kristeva means to say that subjectivity requires language, and language is masculine, grounded in the phallus as the universal signifier. The language and the whole symbolic order are masculine, so one can only enter into it as male. As a result, women can only appear as token of exchange within this masculine economy. Women's own representation is by silence, absence, lack, or hysteria. Therefore, when woman is mirrored in the Freudian- Lacanian mirror there is only lack and deficiency. As Kristeva says, we can say that women cannot speak, cannot be subjects, and certainly cannot develop a feminist symbolic. What we have here is evidence that women do not have language, and therefore, they have no subject position as women: what we have is that a powerful man like Jocelyn Pierston refuses to listen to the women characters in the novel, *The Well Beloved*.

In Hardy's novel, *The Well- Beloved*, Jocelyn Pierston does not focus on the particular woman but rather on her hair, her eyes, or some other body parts. This fragmentation of the beloved both fetishizes and depersonalizes her. Such manish perception of females foregrounds the objectification and commodification giving the status of subordination which is the status- quo of patriarchy. Jocelyn's

depersonalization involves listing of the beloved's various appearances in which he classifies and qualifies each woman according to her physical attributes. This catalogue reinforces the conventional Victorian gender dichotomy between male's intellect and female feeling. In this novel, Miss Marcia Bencomb appears in the form of Pieraton's first lover, Avice Caro. And afterwards, he explains:

She comes nine times in the course of two or three ensuing years.
Four times she masqueraded as a brunette, twice as a pale haired creature, two or three times under completion neither light nor dark. Sometime she was tall, fine girl, but more often, I think she preferred to slip in the skin of a lithe airy being, of no great stature.
(32)

The above lines show that Jocelyn Pierston does not see an ideal beloved on Mercia Bencomb but rather on her hair, her eyes, or some other body parts. In other words, he does not want to get the particular woman but rather attempts to seek the pleasure from their body parts. In this context, Luce Irigaray argues: "Woman is specularized and commodified by symbolic patterns of discourse and representation." (18)

In patriarchal society, women have been reduced to the maternal function. This misplaced abjection is one way to account for women's oppression and degradation within patriarchal cultures and promises a collapse of those symbolic structures. In patriarchal system, the masculine is threatened by an asymmetrical, irrational, wily, and uncountable power of the feminine. Thus women are considered as "not all" or "other". Their desires, feelings emotions and body have been commodified by male. In the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Protagonist Jocelyn Pierston considers the women's body parts as raw-materials or commodities that can easily be bought and sold in the male dominated society.

Pierston is a philanderer or a sensualist that, towards the end of the novel, there is strong result of an action done by him that his sexual experience has been extremely limited. Where women are concerned, his pursuit of perfection is practical as well as theoretical, and latter, conceding that the elderly sculptor's infatuation with a woman would be regarded as the selfish designs of an old man on a maid; the narrator insists that "it was not the flesh; he had never knelt low to that. Not a woman in the world had been wrecked by him, though he had been impassioned by so many" (161).

Pierston never acts upon the desire he feels; and while he provides shelter for both Marcia and Avice II at his London home, instead of assuming the position of lover, he becomes father-figure, strong and competent, displacing the image of his own father in his mind, freeing himself from the domination of a parental figure, and establishing a kind of incest barrier to erotic contact. A fear of submission stemming from Jocelyn's financial dependence on his father may have affected his attitude towards women and promoted the parental, and therefore Platonic love toward them. In this respect, Jacques Lacan argues:

The phallus is the signifier of signifiers; the representative of signification and language. By means of the phallus, the subject comes to occupy the position of 'I' in discourse. The phallus is the crucial signifier in the distribution of power, authority and a speaking position, a kind of mark or badge of a social position.

(126)

The above statement shows that Lacanian term "phallus", a male sexual organ, a symbol of power, authority and authenticity is fixed with the male body that makes a man powerful because of which he occupies the position of 'I' in discourse. In the

novel, *The Well-Beloved*, because of the presence of the phallus, becoming the father figure, Jocelyn Pierston frees himself momentarily from the feelings of inadequacy that plague him, but, more significantly, the parent-child relationship that Jocelyn initiates becomes just another feature in the object-choice and suppression of the erotic component in his relationships. However, I consider this situation just as the experimentation of Jocelyn Pierston towards the female. His parental attitude towards the female characters again places the strata of women within the undercurrents of patriarchy idealized by the Victorian social reality where females were subordinated in this or that way.

Anne Avice, forcing her daughter to be settled with Mr. Jocelyn Pierston says:

Here is Mr. Pierston, and he wishes to be your husband. He is much older than you, but, in spite of it, that you will ever get a better husband I don't believe. Now, will you take him, seeing that state I am in, and how naturally anxious I am to see you set told before I die? 'just for the present only. Come, he is a good man and a clever man, and a rich man. I want you, O so much, to be his wife? I can say no more. (139)

The above quoted lines clarify women's meaningless desires, emotions and feelings. In patriarchal social structure, women are unable to act according to their own desires or wills since their desire is not their own. Thus, it is meaningless and because of which they become submissive, weak and naive. They are highly compelled to follow the male's authority. In the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Anne Avice, accepting Pierston's (a powerful man) marriage proposal forces her daughter, Avice the third to get married with him, that is against her desire. While connecting the Lacanian term

“phallus” to the story or the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, the protagonist Jocelyn pierston unconsciously imposes his power and authority upon the women characters showing his false love towards them. Here phallus means power, authority and authenticity which is presence on male by which Pierston becomes powerful man in the novel *The Well-Beloved*, deconstructs the women’s characters feelings, desires, and emotions. According to the narrator of this story, in patriarchal society, men are powerful and women are powerless and submissive. Women, because of the powerless and submissive nature unable to raise the voice against the male domination. As a result, men take long lenth advantages from women. In the patriarchy, women and their feelings, desires and emotions are considered as commodities which can easily be bought and sold.

Hardy’s novel *The Well- Beloved*, is the story of Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor who is searching for his well beloved and seems to fleetingly find it in three generation of the same family. It takes us on a journey through the life of a man who makes a series of mistakes relating to his love interests. The three Avices, with their different roles in his life were interesting, but the wooign of each, by the increasingly aged hero was not sufficiently believable. In this novel, A man, Jocelyn Pierston courts a girl, Avice Caro when he is twenty, then he backs out before the marries, then twenty years later he courts the Avice’s daughter, Aanne Avice but she backs out on him, then twenty years later, he courts the granddaughter of the woman he was engages to fourty years earlier explaining her mother:

Now, Avice, I’ll to the point at once. Virtually I have known your daughter any number of years. When I talk to her I can anticipate every turn of her thought, every sentiment, every act, so long did I study those things in your mother and in you. Therefore I do not

require to learn her, she learnt by me in her previous existence. Now, don't be shocked: I am willing to marry her- I should be overjoyed to do it, if there would be nothing preposterous about it, or that would seem like a man making himself too much of a fool, and so degrading her in consenting. I can make her comparatively rich, as you know, and I would indulge her every whim. There is the idea, bluntly put. It would set right something in my mind that has been wrong for forty years. After my death she would have plenty of freedom and plenty of means to enjoy it. (130)

Above all lines show the depiction of the unchanging aspects of human nature. In the patriarchal social structure, men have unchanged nature. The human nature under scrutiny in the novel is that of Jocelyn Pierston. When the novel begins he is a young man of twenty with dreams of becoming a famous sculptor. The novel does not follow Jocelyn for every moment in his life, but instead focuses on three critical periods. These episodes occur at twenty-year intervals and involve romantic relationships with three generations of women from the same family. Even in the age of 60, Jocelyn Pierston does not change his mentality to get an ideal woman though he is deserted by his sense of self.

It is quite clear that Hardy's novel *The Well-Beloved* is a novel on male domination over female. In this concern, a French feminist, Luce Irigaray argues: "Because of the way women and the feminine have been constructed with in phallogentrism, women have no access to a history of their own. Women have no space- time of their own and thus no possibility of a future" (24). Likewise, another French feminist, Helene Cixous states: "[P]hallogentrism is predicated upon the exclusion of female desire. 'And each story, each myth says to her: There is no place

for your desire in our affaires of state.' She is absence that enables his presenece" (53).

According to both Cixous and Irigaray's interpretation, women's desire is meaningless in patriarchal social structure. For women, to create their desire within the phallogentrism is valueless because their desire is very difficult to be fulfilled in male dominated society. Within the phallogentrism, only men are powerful so they take maximum satisfaction from women in the domain of love, sex and domestic work. In patriarchy, only men have access to a history of their own and thus have possibility of a future. In Hardy's novel *The Well-Beloved*, Protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston is against women's desire. As a powerful man, he imposes his power indirectly upon Avice the third through her mother Anne Avice. He forces Anne Avice to get married with her daughter, Avice the third by his powerful language only for sexual pleasure. Thus, all the women characters are dominated by a single male character, Jocelyn Pierston in the novel, *The Well-Beloved*.

Strictly speaking, the protagonist, Pierston regards himself very authoritative or powerful man due to the presence of phallus on him and says: "[F]litting from each to each individual has been anything but a pleasure for me" (33). Pierston in the novel is searching for the 'well beloved' and fleetingly finds it in three generations of the same family for pleasure only. He loves one woman, takes physical pleasure and afterward rejects her; another twenty years later he becomes so infatuated with another woman again takes pleasure and ignores her and so on. In the same consideration, Lacan argues:

Phallus offers stability and authenticity of meaning, as well as authority and power. Lacan links the phallus more closely with the male subject; men can identify with the phallus in a way that women cannot. Women become 'other' not to be understood be

cause she is not linked to the phallus; The women is only understood negatively. Lacan puts 'women' in the position of the excluded term. (173)

Another French feminist, Luce Irigaray states, "Women is specularized and commodified by symbolic patterns of discourse and representation" (18). In the patriarchal social structure, the narrator of this novel says that males are thousand times powerful than women because phallus is linked more closely with the male subject. Males regard women as 'other' because they lack phallus. In the symbolic order, women are powerless so they are commodified and specularized in the male dominated society. They also become means of pleasure for men. Their body is considered as raw-material which can simply be bought and sold.

Near the end of the novel Pierston finds himself standing with third Avice on the very spot at which he had waited for her grandmother forty years earlier, and reflects that if she had kept their appointment his whole life might have been different: "Instead of that, forty years had passed- forty years of severance from Avice, till a secondly renewed copy of his sweetheart had arisen to fill her place. But he, alas, was not renewed" (133). Strictly speaking, it should be noted, the two later Avices are not merely copies of the first: Hardy gives his story an added interest by making them different personalities despite their uncanny physical resemblance. The second is a simpler, more naive woman than her mother, while the third is a woman of her time, a proto- feminist who has something in common. In this context, Helene Cixous argues:

The feminine signifies the social repression of female autonomy and desire and vital creative force. The feminine can also be understood as a description of a type of ethics which affirms women's vitality and creativity against the deathly constraints of a social order which has

historically denied women the free expression of their desire, and their liberty as fellow human beings (125).

According to Cixous's interpretation, in the patriarchal social structure, all the women are not submissive or naive but also some have strong and violent thought of nature. Most of the women are submissive so men are able to take advantages of them in the various domains such as love and sex in the patriarchal society. Thus, the women who are naive, submissive and shy natured, their body has been commodified by symbolic patterns of discourse and representation.

In the patriarchal social structure, most of the women are not naive, submissive and shy natured but rather violent thought of nature because of that men are unable to take maximum advantages from them as Hardy shows in his novel *The Well-Beloved*. Hardy includes two types of women characters- strong and weak. Mercia Bencomb, Nichola Pine- Avon and Avice Caro are weak characters with whom protagonist Jocelyn Pierston takes maximum satisfaction as well as advantages from them in the domain of love and sex. In this novel a weak character, Avice Caro becomes infatuated towards Jocelyn Pierston, a violent character. She accepts his entire proposal such as marriage and sexual proposal even though her mother warns her to be away from him explaining:

Well, it can't be helped now. You must be careful in the future.

He's got lots of young women, I'll warrant, and has few thoughts left for you. He's what they call a sculptor, and he means to be a great genius in that line some day, they do say. (9)

The above lines show Jocelyn Pierston's violent nature towards women characters. The sentence "He has got lots of young women" clarifies that protagonist Pierston does not concentrate on single woman but he wants to get more than one. It is also

quite clear that before proposing Avice Caro, he has already got lots of women for his satisfaction or pleasure. Avice Caro, as a weak and submissive character, follows Pierston's authority, as a result, she gets lots of physical and mental trouble from him in her life. The same event happens with other two women characters- Mercia Bencomb and Nichola Pine- Avon.

Another woman, Anne Avice is both weak and strong character. She is a weak character in the sense that she accepts Jocelyn Pierston's marriage proposal for her daughter, Avice III and says to her:

Avice, my dear; she said, advancing to where the girl mused in the window gap, what do you think of Mr. Pierston paying his addresses to you- coming courting, as I call it in my old fashioned way. Supposing he were to, would you encourage him? 'He is a man in society, and would take you to an elegant house in London suited to your education, instead of leaving you to mope here.

(134)

In addition, she also forces her daughter to settle with Mr. Pierston saying to her daughter, Avice III:

Here is Mr. Pierston, and he wishes to be your husband. He is much older than you, but, in spite of it, that you will ever get a better husband I don't believe. Now, will you take him, seeing that state I am in, and how naturally anxious I am to see you settled before I die? 'Just for the present only. Come, he is a good man and a clever man, and a rich man. I want you, O so much, to be his wife? I can say no more. (139)

In the patriarchal society, weak and submissive woman simply follows the powerful

or authoritative persons without thinking of her future. And because of that she gets maximum trouble in various domain by male.

According to Julia Kristeva, "In patriarchal cultures, women have been reduced to the maternal function. This misplaced abjection is one way to account for women's oppression and degradation within patriarchal cultures" (98). She means to say that most of the women in patriarchy love so much to their children because of which they become submissive, weak and naive. And due to that nature, women's oppression and degradation within patriarchal culture appear. As Kristeva says, in the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Avice II is reduced to the maternal function and then forces her daughter to get married with sixty years old Jocelyn Pierston without thinking her daughter's future. But, as a strong and violent character, Avice the third rejects her proposal replying her mother: "I don't care enough about him to do any encouraging. It is his business, I should think, to do all" (134). In patriarchy, all the women do not follow the authoritative person but rather some women can raise the voice against male domination. In this context, a French feminist, Luce Irigaray argues:

She suggests playfully, women have a lot to offer because they have more in the way of sexual pleasure- they don't just have the one thing? what Irigaray shows is that, just as it is the folly of patriarchy to define women according to their lack of the phallus, so it is equally mistaken to define their language, their existence under the symbolic system, according to the masculine model.(248)

Irigaray's statement clarifies that women, in patriarchal society, are not less powerless than men but, rather are equally powerful and authoritative persons to them. For Lacan, men are powerful because of the presence of the phallus but, Irigaray opposes his argument and argues that "instead of the singular phallus, women have the benefit

of multiple sexual organs” (18). She means to say that they have the sex organs about everywhere, they experience pleasure almost everywhere. They have a lot to offer because they have more in the way of sexual pleasure. So, for Irigaray, women are equally powerful like men. As she argued, In Hardy’s *The Well- Beloved*, a strong woman character, Avice the third representing her power raises the voice against a male character, Jocelyn Pierston by rejecting his marriage proposal vehemently.

In Hardy’s novel, *The Well- Beloved*, Protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston and Anne Avice are alone in the studio, and his feelings are vent. Putting his arms round her he says, “My darling, sweet little Avice! I want to know this : will you be married to me, and live here with me always and ever?”(105). In response, Avice II says to him, “O Mr. Pierston, what nonsense!” (105). Again, Pierston says to her, “O no - I should not mind that if it came to marrying. The difference is that much for husband and wife, though it is rather much for keeping company !” (106). She answers him: “Why, I didn’t know you was thinking of me like that. I hadn’t any thought of it ! And all alone here ! what shall I do?” (106). Finally he forces her saying, “Say yes, my pretty Avice ! We’ll then go out and be married at once, and nobody be any wiser” (106). She boldly Responds to him: “I couldn’t, sir” (106).

What do the above quoted dialogues between two opposite sex show ? By this dialogue, the narrator of the novel, *The Well- Beloved*, tries to clarify that even in the patriarchy, both men and women are equal in various domains. It means women can do what men do. If men attempt to impose their power upon women, women can resist that power. In regard to the males, Jacques Lacan agrees : “Phallus offers stability and authenticity of meaning, as well as authority and power. Men can identify with the phallus in a way that women cannot” (173). And phallus is the “crucial signifier in the distribution of power, authority and a speaking position” (126). Lacan means to

say that males are so powerful due to the presence of the phallus in them. They simply can get hegemony over women in various domains such as love, sex and domestic works. According to Lacan, women are thousand times powerless than men because they lack phallus. But rejecting Lacan's argumentation, Luce Irigaray states, "Phallus as restrictive, monolithic, limitedly singular and fixed. She resists such a fixity of meaning that phallogentrism implies. Instead of the singular phallus, Irigaray argues that women have the benefit of multiple sexual organs." (248)

She means to say that if men are so powerful because of the phallus, women should be more powerful than men because men have singular phallus but women have the benefit of multiple sexual organs. So, as the powerful women, they can resist against male domination. According to Luce Irigaray, Male's imposition of power upon most of the women does not affect them because they are equally powerful like men. In the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Jocelyn Pierston attempts to possess Anne Avice by his attractive and powerful language. He tries his best to impose his power upon her but as a powerful woman, Anne Avice is not possessed by him. His attempts of possession of her become unsuccessful because of her rejection of his marriage proposal. Pieraton's imposition of power upon Anne Avice does not affect her.

Since patriarchal construction considers beloved as goddess, mother, mistress, sister, mirroring counterpart, all in one, the lover's wraith in a changed sex idealization of women- it is evident in the person of Avice II in *The Well-Beloved*. She is "in the pursuit of impossible ideal," as a surprised Jocelyn observes, "Just as he had been himself doing of the last twenty years" (95). Avice II describes the process as such :

I get tired of my lovers as soon as I get to know them well. What I see in one young man for a while soon leaves him and goes into

another yonder, and I follow, and what I admire fades out of him
and springs up somewhere else, and so I follow on, and never fix
one. (103)

Despite the nobility of Victorian particularly in terms of ruling patriarchy, Avice II's revolt for freedom profligates a sense of generating consciousness of women about their position in the society. As in the given excerpt where Avice II locates her freedom in order to understand their self has been implanted to which the patriarchal response is not good. For example, Jocelyn says to Avice II, "Where have you been?" he said, with almost angered concerned on his face. You ought not to have been absent more ten minutes"(103). Here, the sense of fanatical patriarchy is prevalent since under the assumption of created rules from the patriarchal subjugation, Pierston attempts to subordinate Avice II. Just as Helene Cixous says: "It is time, says Cixous, to liberate the new women from the old to break with male written history, and to write a new history" (706). She means to say that history has been written in male's language. There is not any significance of female language in patriarchy. She argues that the feminine is absent from the patriarchal order of language. It is represented only in the negative. Because of which females are exploited, subjugated and subordinated in the male practice of patriarchy. This practice of patriarchy deserves in the name of law and morality to place females within the limitations of general principles encapsulated with the ideological singation. With such moral principles which are only for the sake of males in the society, patriarchal social practice delimits the standard of women placing them in the marginal and subordinated position equating them the other. But, she also states that women must be librated from the male dominated society by breaking male written history and writing their own new history. In the same way, in the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, women characters like Anne

Avice, Avice the third are initially dominated by male character, Jocelyn Pierston but later break the male history and try their best to establish their own history.

The narcissistic tendencies that determine Jocelyn's object choice also influence Avice II's and their kinship in seeking lovers they can not possess them as mirror images of one another. Avice II's self-sufficiency and inaccessibility stem, in part, from her loving herself more than any other, and this merely intensifies Jocelyn's desire for her. Avice II becomes "the essence and epitome of all that is desirable in this existence" (108), especially after Jocelyn Pierston realizes that he has a rival for her affection, a man younger than he who can do more than just intellectualize his emotions. Jocelyn comes to this realization when he sees "the mouth of some hulking fellow..., upon hers, which he himself hardly ventured to look at" (109). Jocelyn's desire for possession increases with the object/beloved's inaccessibility, and Avice II's own desire for the young man follows the same course. She becomes the female counter image of Jocelyn. Assuming the position of "subject," she seeks a young man to embody her masculine ideal, and she tries to gain possession of the young man who has intensified her passion. Jocelyn emerges from this relationship "with a feeling of impotence" that often ensues when the subject fails to gain possession of the desired object (102). Here, in this point, Avice II's attempts to make a free choice regarding the masculine ideal gives the sense that despite the orthodox strata of Victorian patriarchy, a kind of consciousness regarding the position of women in society has been generated. In other words, through the depiction of the character Avice II who searches for the young man who befits herself, Hardy, in this novel, attempts to raise the voice against Victorian societal autocracy, exploitation, subjugation, subordination, and trivialization done from the malpractice of patriarchy to females.

Avice the third is also both weak and strong character. She is a weak character in the sense that she agrees with her mother's proposal to get married with sixty years old, Jocelyn Pierston that is against her will "Very well- I feel I ought to agree to marry him, since you tell me to,' she answered quietly, after some thought. 'I see that it would be a wise thing to do, and that you wish it, and that Mr. Pierston really does-like me. so-so that'" (139).

Initially, all the women are powerless but later they may become powerful. They have got inborn quality like men of being strong, powerful and optimistic but because of social bond they are unable to become so. As Luce Irigaray argues, "Women don't have their own desire, feeling and capacity to speak because they are constructed within phallogentrism" (..). In the same way, in the novel, *The Well Beloved*, no women characters have capability or calibre to oppose the male character Jocelyn Pierston because of the male superiority in Victorian society or women are constructed under the phallogentrism. As Irigaray stated, in *The Well-Beloved*, Avice III, at the beginning, cannot act upon her desire and thought but rather for her mother and Jocelyn Pierston's desire. She is compelled to get married with Pierston that is against her will. Later she has to accept their proposal. Thus, in Victorian social structure, women cannot act upon their own desire, feeling, emotion and sentiment but rather act for men.

Avice the third, is also a strong character in the sense that she, in the rejection of old Jocelyn Pierston and adoption of her own lover Mr. Levere, writes a letter to her mother, Anne Avice at the day of her wedding to Pierston:

I felt, though I had intended to give him up, I could not now be comingly marry any other men and that I ought to marry him. We decided to do it once, before anybody could hinder us. So we

came down before it was light, and have gone away to get the ceremony solemnized. (155)

The above quotation shows that as a strong woman character, Avice the third vehemently opposes the male domination. She, fearlessly rejects his marriage proposal and adopts her own lover, Leverre in front of authoritative persons. In this consideration, Julia Kristeva, asserts her views: "Happiness exists only at the price of a revolt. None of us has pleasure without confronting an obstacle, prohibition, authority, or law that allows us to realize ourselves as autonomous and free" (113). This statement shows that confronting an obstacle, prohibition, and authority one can simply enter into the happiness and pleasure. While linking it to the story of the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, a strong female character, Avice the third facing the authority of the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston, overcomes of her problem. In this regard, a French feminist, Luce Irigaray also suggests that in Western culture, the imaginary body which dominates on a culture level is a male body. History was written in male language by males. As the same token, males have worshipped their patriarchal gods who are the projection of male subjectivities. A masculine subject can not be the standard of humanity. So women need to gain their own subjectivity in the masculine society. What Irigaray suggests is that in order to create female identity and female subjectivity, women must have a bonding among themselves and language of their own. She also argues that the complexity of female sexuality and eroticism does not fit into male notion of sexuality. Irigaray discoverses women's autoeroticism. In her autoeroticism, a woman is not "pleasure-giving" to men but "self embracing" (85). The autoeroticism could be a clue to overcome the logic of sameness in phallogocentric understanding of sexuality and its male God. The language she uses to describe this God comes from her account of morphology of women's continual self-

touching in the carelessness of two lips. Therefore, Irigaray invokes a new God: “A female god is yet to come” (85). She emphasizes that every woman should imagine a God.

Like Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, the narrator of the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, Thomas Hardy through his novel wants to show that nothing is impossible even for the women if they attempt to do fearlessly. They can do like men. If women can speak against the male domination fearlessly, they can easily overcome their problems as Avice the third tries her best to overcome her problem by speaking boldly against Pieraton.

Women in Thomas Hardy’s novel appear to have no control over their conduct or their destiny. Hardy’s women characters struggle, sometimes winning, often losing, but they are not tame objects to be manipulated. Their resistance emerges in their sexuality, a quality with Hardy was often forced to cloak. While reading the novels of Thoms Hardy one cannot help but want to develop into the author’s mind about these incredible women that he develops. Women who are strong- minded, strong willed, soulful, and imbued with their latent natural femininity and sexuality and that these women defy the Victorian norms and convention at every turn.

In Hardy’s *The Well-Beloved*, presentation of the main character Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor, as the ideal of patriarchal strata who in his entire life, searches for the ‘ideal’ woman flitting from woman to woman, subordinates the position of woman. For him, women are just the means of consumption by which he tries to get the maximum satisfaction. He is in search of perfection in both body and soul. His life is an obsessive, involuntary chase for the permanent embodiment of the ideal feminine, ‘the well beloved’ which obviously sets the submissive position of women in the patriarchal society. He glimpses of her everywhere- on the streets, in drawing

rooms, at railway station. Pierston wants something he can hardly identify the 'well beloved' is simply a "phenomenon." There is such a mixture of hope and anguish in Pierston's pursuit that his wishes almost seem outside of consciousness or volition, and he often feels cursed by his desires. His life's pursuit finally centers upon three generations of the original Avice Caro from his native Isle of Slingers, with whom he fell in love at the age of twenty. He loves the daughter of the first Avice when he is forty, and the granddaughter when he is sixty but none of Pierston's love affairs brings him happiness. Finally he is unable to get an 'ideal woman'. So, being tormented by the quest of the 'well-beloved', Pierston says to Mercia Bencomb: "I have no love to give? you know, Mercia; he said. 'But such friendship as I am capable of is yours till the end'" (172). This admission denotes his physical and emotional failure as a lover, but it does not suggest an absence of erotic desire within his love. Lacan says: "The signifier slides over dignified, which is like Jellyfish (difficult to acquire). It means signified can never be acquired" (169). In the same way, Jocelyn Pierston moves into the chain of signifiers (women) which is never ending process. He tries his best to get the signified, an ideal woman spending his forty years of life but ultimately he fails.

The protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston realizes his misdeed running after the 'well beloved' and says: "I want to see them never any more!. . . Instead of sweet smell there shall be stink, and there shall be burning instead of beauty" (169). These lines also show his physical and emotional failure as a lover. At the end of the novel, Jocelyn Pierston realizes his misdeed and never wants to see the 'well-beloved' again.

The fact that Protagonist Jocelyn Pierston tries his best to possess Avice the third even in the age of sixty. But, as a strong character, Avice the third flatly rejects him and runs away to her own lover, Leverre right at the time of their wedding. At the

mean time, Pierston, being pessimistic because of his failure or being tormented by the quest of an ideal woman says:

Don't blame them, don't blame them !' said Jocelyn in an even and characterless voice. Don't blame her, particularly. She didn't make the circumstances. I did....it was how I served her grand mother Well, she's gone! You needn't make a mystery of it. Tell it to all the Island: say that a man came to marry a wife, and didn't find her at home. Tell everybody that she's run away. It must be known sooner or later (156).

The above quotation clarifies Pierston's strong realization what he had done with the women during the age of 20s to 60s. Lacan argues, "Unfortunately one can never fulfill one's desire. The loss of the imaginary is a permanent one. Once the division is made, there is no concealing the cracks. But this desire is repressed, and this act of repression brings the unconscious into being" (165). In the same way, In the novel, *The Well-Beloved*, protagonist Jocelyn Pierston becomes totally failure in the case of achieving the 'well beloved'. It means his desire of an ideal woman remains unfulfilled. The fact that Pierston does not blame women characters but himself for what he had done with them in the past. For example, he does not blame Avice the third when she runs away to her own lover right at the day of their wedding.

Avice III underscores her own perfection of him as parents, and "stand-in" Fairy Godmother when she says "Mother being an invalid, you are in her place" (177). Ironically, her statement emasculates him. Perhaps, she recognizes in him the female form that he has been seeking in life but has failed to recognize in himself. By promoting the union between her daughter and Jocelyn Pierston, Avice II reinforces Nineteenth century discourse that figures marriage in terms of financial stability and

class mobility and defines the female as dependent upon the male. Avice III, however, does not see marriage as a merger, having internalized the emerging middle class values regarding love and marriage. Moreover, education allows her some measure of economic freedom and has served as the impetus for self fulfillment over filial duty. She signals a feminine unwillingness to self-sacrificial offering which patriarchs do not consider in affirmative way.

Avice III's behavior betrays the existence of a would be lover and intensifies Jocelyn Pierston's jealous desire for possession: "[H]e resolves to make the most of having her under his influence" (173). In his haste for the lost harmony with the past, Jocelyn sets an earlier date for the marriage; but Avice III upholds the primacy of her own desires. On the eve of the marriage, she goes to meet Henri Leverre and becomes his wife, leaving Jocelyn in the same predicament in which he left her grandmother Avice I forty years before by bringing him full circle in the cycle of desire. The sentence "Don't blame her" is the ultimate self realization of Jocelyn Pierston provides the sense of awareness of patriarchy about its own frailty to envision women as subordinated, commodified "other" in the society that does not have any passion, emotion, sentiment and overall, the freedom of rationality and choice. Further, Avice III's own choice of her life partner, objecting the dogmatic standpoint of Victorian ideological signation of patriarchy, challenges its autonomy.

Avice III's elopement extinguishes the cycle of Jocelyn's desire and leaves him desiring only oblivion: "He desired to sleep away his tendencies" (191); and while an old apparition that may rekindle the passion of desire reappears in the form of Marcia Bencomb, he insists on having "lived a day too long" (92). In his despair, Jocelyn Pierston continues playing the only role in which he has been successful- the father-figure by providing Avice III with a dowry and making her as he says, "a good

match” for Henri Leverre (195). Jocelyn Pierston’s emotional trauma transforms itself into a physical one that leaves him wavering between life and death; and when he revives, Jocelyn Pierston finds him in a “mental equilibrium and physical calm” that characterizes the absence of desire, for desire demands the possibility of passionate activity (197).

All in all, the narrator of the novel, *The Well-Beloved* makes clear that in the patriarchal social structure, men are not only powerful, authoritative, and strong but they are also weak, powerless and submissive because they can realize their mistake or misdeeds; they can be failure in their life. According to Hardy’s novel, *The Well-Beloved*, most of the women are not only weak, submissive, naive and powerless but they are also strong, authoritative and powerful in patriarchal culture. In this novel, Jocelyn Pierston is both strong and weak character. As a strong character, he dominates the women characters severely but as a weak character, he realizes his misdeeds and becomes a failure at the end. And, Anne Avic as a weak character, tolerates physical and mental torture given by Pierston and being a strong woman, opposes him by rejecting his marriage proposal. Similarly, Avic the third being a weak woman accepts his marriage proposal because of her mother’s pressure and as a strong character, she becomes successful to be equally powerful to men by opposing Pierston’s authority. Dramatizing such stereotypical strata of the Victorian society, Hardy, in this novel, sketches the realistic tenets of that period.

In the light of such textual speculation it is worthwhile to mention that Thomas Hardy’s novel *The Well-Beloved* provides the realistic tenets in order to understand the Victorian social reality, in which females are treated as submissive, subjugated and subordinated because of the strict practice of patriarchy. During the Victorian period, the condition of women was not good because at that time women were not

considered to be in the position of human being so that they were placed in the margin of social structure. This novel is such picturioration of exploitation, eroticism, subordination, subjugation as well as marginalization of females from patriarchal social standard and on the other front, it provides the glimpses of optimism depicting the strong female characters as conscious about their situation who within that social constraints search for the autonomous choice, marked with individuality challenging the autonomy of patriarchy.

Above all, Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* depicts women as the subordinated other under patriarchy, there is no value judgement regarding the issues of women. Women are considered to be merely object of male desire which males intend to fulfill as Jocelyn Pierston does in the novel. Despite its least affirmation regarding the position and provisional egalitarianism of the females, the novel dominantly speculates the Victorian social reality particularly marked with the undercurrents of fanatical patriarchal ideology which places males at the supreme position, whereas female are placed at the margin as the other. Thus, this novel is the epitom of feminine subordination from the spirit of patriarchy in terms of sex and sexuality.

III. Search for an Ideal Woman as an Impossible Project in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*

The Well-Beloved by Thomas Hardy can be read as a deeply personal novel that reflects Hardy's nagging preoccupations, even obsession, at a particular phase of his life. Time was always a major theme for Hardy both as a novelist and a poet but in *The Well-Beloved*, he traces the ageing process of an individual through three generations, so that by the end the protagonist belongs to roughly the same age- group that Hardy himself had reached by the 1890s.

Thomas Hardy's novel, *The Well-Beloved* delineates the situation of women in Victorian patriarchal society where females were exploited, subordinated, and undermined. Hardy's presentation of male character Jocelyn Pierston as the epitom of patriarchal subjugative practice of Victorian society proliferates the issue of submission of female as he goes on to search for the perfect beloved throughout his life. Being the role model of Victorian society in terms of law, order and morality, Jocelyn Pierston follows them, in order to fill up his 'desire' for the 'ideal beloved'. Since the concept of 'ideal' is also shaped with the undercurrents of patriarchy, there is no space for the freedom and autonomy of females in Victorian society which Hardy depicts in his novel, *The Well-Beloved*.

In Hardy's *The Well Beloved*, presentation of the main character Jocelyn Pierston, a sculptor, as the ideal of patriarchal strata who in his entire life searches for the 'ideal' woman flitting from woman to woman, subordinates the position of woman. For him, women are just the means of consumption by which he can get the maximum satisfaction. Dramatising such stereotypical strata of the Victorian society, Hardy, in this novel, sketches the realistic tenets of that period.

Patriarchy defines itself in relation to the supremacy of males in the society. In

patriarchal practice, there is no need to speculate the status of males as an ideal one. Because of such representation, patriarchy undercuts the egalitarian standpoint to view women in the society placing them as the subordinated 'object' or 'other'. Such marginalization of women is an inherent tenet of male practice of patriarchy evident in *The Well-Beloved* because it depicts the ego of masculinity in the name of 'desire' or 'imagination' of 'ideal' and 'perfection' searching for that domain in women.

The Well-Beloved is a focused dissection of one man's pursuit of individual fulfillment coloured with the norms, values and perception of patriarchy, along two paths: love and art. The protagonist, Jocelyn Pierston is a sculptor in search of perfection in both body and soul. His life is an obsessive, involuntary chase for the permanent embodiment of the ideal feminine, the 'well-beoved' which obviously sets the submissive position of women in the patriarchal society.

All in all, Jocelyn Pierston's necrophiliac desire and his swinging towards various women during his life along with the three generations of Avicé Caros in the name of searching for perfection, ideal would be beloved serves as the genesis of patriarchy it promulgates, subordinate and subjugative standard of women in undercurrents of Victorian social reality. Depicting such societal scenario, Thomas Hardy in *The Well-Beloved* discloses the male directed structuration where females are treated as the 'object' of male ego and desire being in the position of margin or the 'other.'

However, at the end of the novel, Thomas Hardy clarifies that entire women, in patriarchal society are not submissive, naive and weak but most of the women are also powerful, authoritative and strong like men because they can resist/oppose the male domination as well as attempt to break the male written history and try their best to establish their own history. It means that women, in patriarchy also attempt to

spend thier life according to thier own wish, desire and sentiment as Avice the third breaking the Pierston's authority, spends her life according to her own wish.

Moreover, Thomas Hardy also clarifies that men, in Victorian Period, were not only powerful, authoritative and strong but also submissive and weak like most of the women because they were compelled to realize thier misdeed and thus failed as the protagonist Jocelyn Pierston. Describing such events in his novel, *The Well- Beloved* Hardy attempts to sketch the psychologically realistic tenets of Victorian period.

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