

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Fate in Thomas Hardy's

Far From the Madding Crowd

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ABSTRACT

Fatalism centers human feeling and sentiment towards the negative view of the life or the dark side of human beings. It, instead of fulfilling human desires, suffers them heavily and takes no heed to them. It shows that human beings, in their lives, play a perpetual hide and seek game with divine power till human beings come to realize their defeat and give up their happiness. Human beings, throughout their lives endeavor towards one end, destiny towards another. Finally, it is destiny which decides what is to happen. Man cannot modify the will of destiny but vice versa is improbable because it has something hidden sense of inevitability which is out of reach and control of human beings.

In the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy's characters are shown as controlled by unforeseen forces. When they desire one thing but they cannot get it and remain unfulfilled. When the characters wish to get something, chance and coincidence divert their efforts to opposite directions. Through his characters the novelist tries to show the event taking place in their lives are the outcomes of divine will rather than individual will. Hardy's philosophy on fatalism leads us to note that lives of all human beings and characters presented in this novel are dominated and conditioned by the fate beyond human imagination and thinking.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Thomas Hardy's Life and Works

Thomas Hardy, a Victorian novelist, was born at Higher Bock Hampton near Stainsford in Dorset, on 2nd June 1840. He was from a well-known Mason's family. Hardy owed a kind of beauty of the rural background from his parents. He also inherited a love of music from his father and was encouraged in reading many books from his mother.

Hardy, at first went to the village school and then to a school in Dorchester. There, he came in close contact with John Hicks, a very famous local architect; William Darnes, the Dorset poet; and Horace Moule, the clever son of a vicar whose close contact and acquaintance aroused much intellectual stimulus and zeal in him. He also became an assistant to Arthur Blomfield and worked hard at his profession. He continued to live at home of small rural society and found the refreshment and strength, which made him later widely known as the novelist of English literature.

In April 1862, he went to London from Dorchester and secured a job as a draft man in the office of church designer. While working there, he also found a time for extensive reading. After returning back from London to Dorset in 1867, he began his literary career by writing his very first novel named *The Poor Man and Lady*. He, at the same time, on the way of making his own career continued writing different types of literary works of arts. He also composed many poems and sent them to periodicals but most of them were returned unpublished and others remained there without any progress. He thought of it very seriously about what made it so and took Meredith's advice literally and composed a novel entitled *Desperate Remedies* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, in which both tragedy and irony merged together in his works. His first popular success is *Far From the Madding Crowd* published in 1874, which is supposed to be a masterpiece.

The first major undertaking of Hardy is the establishment of his imaginative world of Wessex- geography, landscape, folkways, agricultural pursuits, quaint peasantry which serve as a background for the novels of his characters. Beginning with the slander idyll of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), he proceeds to the full length pastoral of the sheep country, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) and reaches the height of his power in *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). The sober beauty of the country and the quaintness of peasants' ways and thoughts penetrate his spirit and become the very ground and substance of his imagination.

Hardy's career divides itself into three periods. The first period proves that he is a novelist with the publication of his first novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871) and the last novel *Jude the Obscure* (1896); the second period consists of his great poetic drama, *The Dynasts* (1903-08) and the third period begins with *The Time's Laughing Stocks* (1909) where this period is totally devoted to the lyrical period. In spite of these different literary periods, the theme remains the same that the strivings and passions of individuals are in futile conflict with the relentless process of the world.

His philosophical world always remained under the control of the cruel and senseless power that we call fate. Fate shows its appearance in different forms and shapes as chance and coincidence affecting the lives of the characters. In his first masterpiece *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the readers notice the invisible hands of fate playing with its characters just like wanton boys do play with the butterflies. It means that all the characters of this novel have been made as puppets by the unseen power, fate. Through the human life, Hardy portrays has its gaiety, its humor, its

tenderness and nobility, his pessimistic attitude prevails in the main thread of this novel as some other novels.

William J. Long remarks on Hardy's philosophy like this:

Hardy makes man an insignificant part of the world, struggling against powers greater than him, sometimes against systems which he can not reach or influence, sometimes against a kind of grim world-spirit who delights in making human affairs go wrong. He therefore is hardly a realist, but then a man blinded by pessimism. (518)

In his novels, fate plays its role by bringing coincidences together as a matter of chance. The novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, has been written from the perspectives of fate and pessimism where he uses coincidences as decisive factors to determine all events where there is no control of hand of human beings but fate or supernatural elements or powers. This novel shows the influence of Charles Darwin on Hardy. In *A Short History of English Literature*, Andrew Sanders remarks:

Hardy's reversal of St. Paul's image of creation groaning in its birth pangs reflects his interests in geological theory and in the doubts cast on traditional interpretations of the origins of life by Charles Darwin. [...] His vastly expanded chronology of life, displacement of mankind from its proud assumption of superiority and his arguments concerning natural selection and adaptation seem merely to have confirmed Hardy's sense of a dispassionate evolving universe and nature which had to be understood without recourse to the idea of a benevolent creation. [...] Nature rarely fosters individual enlightenment and sees in a proper perspective. It initiates against any comforting belief in providence and in a sympathetic responses between human beings and their environment. (264)

In most of Hardy's novels, nature plays a larger part in order to determine the destiny of the characters. So, it can be called and considered that nature is the great teacher who guides human beings. According to Hardy, human beings are guided by the unseen power, fate from which human life is dominated. Hardy's characters remain stable or constant because their desires and ambitions remain unfulfilled in the unsatisfying thirst for happiness. Human beings always seek happiness but fate does just opposite in his novels.

So far the range of Hardy's novels is concerned, he is limited to the south-west countryside of England, Dorset, where he was born and spent his first twenty years of the impressionable life. Those impressions pierce down to that deepest stratum of the mind where the seeds of creative life lie hidden. As Conrad's most memorable figures are drawn from the seamen and Scott's memorable figures are drawn from the people of Edinburgh, Hardy's figures are from the rural Dorset. Hardy has been impressed with the landowners, tenant farmers, dealers, craftsmen and laborers of the place. The provincial towns and villages, heaths and woods of Wessex, which are the world of his youth, have taken strong hold of him and become the constant materials for his novels throughout his life. Hardy not only knows the land of Wessex with the life but also feels its moods and caprices.

Hardy and His Contemporaries

Victorian period can be taken as the very fertile period for the development of English novels. During this period, novels became a real means to serve as social

mirror. Most of the Victorian novels came forward with their truest pictures of the contemporary society. This period has brought phenomenal progress in this discipline.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the most popular of the Victorian age. He composed many novels of which many of them are written from the pessimistic point of view. Among them, *Oliver Twist* drew the attention of the people to the dreadful conditions of workhouse. He believed that blind forces or will, which never cared for man's joys and sorrows, kept life moving. He has also chosen the rural setting where the characters are from very poor and backward background. He rouses pity in us for the lot of the poor whose suffering, grief and exploitation greatly shock and make us unhappy. Such types of miserable figures are easily found in his novels like *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Pickwick Papers*. His novels reveal the situation of poverty, social discrimination, frustration and family cruelty and violence against children, religious hypocrisy and excessive corruption are also beautifully portrayed and sketched. Thus, the sense of pessimism is prevalent in almost all his novels. Long mentions, "First as a child, poor, and lonely, longing for love and for the society, he laid the foundation for these heart-rending picture of children, which have moved so many readers to unaccustomed tears" (518).

Similarly, Bronte Sisters, Charlotte Bronte and Emily Bronte, have also given significant contribution to the Victorian era. In their works, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Height*, feminine life is highlighted and the torture and suffering of the heroines are depicted. The subtle picture of taking revenge on one's family, make the people feel that human mind is directed towards the negative side which can be taken as the most remarkable tragic turning point in the human life.

George Eliot (1819-80) always preferred living in the countryside than in the town. She always studied her landscape thoroughly and used its people before writing. She wrote *Mill on the Floss* and *Adam Bede*. She has also chosen the countryside and very simple characters and their sufferings in their lives. Her writings manifest her desire for nature's law, which are inexorable that always plays wit human beings to suffer again and again. Breaking and violating the moral laws also lead to the punishments in the case of Maggie and Tom in the *Mill on the Floss*. They have violently broken the laws of nature because of their true love that nature could not tolerate, and ultimately they die. So, fate plays a hide and seek game upon the lives of all these characters. In her novels, she presents bitterness and sufferings in human life. So, life's painful events, desperate feelings and gloomy atmosphere are highlighted in her works. She portrays in her novels unhappy ending and great suffering of the characters, hardness of rural life, agony and misunderstanding which are the main tools of her novels to make her novel gloomy and pessimistic.

Eliot with her humor and pathos, and heart-rending tragic scenes touches the core of sensitive human heart. Beside these, there are some other novelists like William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Charles Kingsley, George Borrow, Frederick Marryat, George Moor, Rudyard Kipling, and so on. After the industrial revolution, the general life became more troublesome and hard so much so that rural and pastoral lives were greatly affected; they lacked their basic need so people of the time became pessimistic.

Victorian novelists mainly raised the issues with pessimistic attitudes with negative aspects: pains, sufferings, disappointments, passions, emotions, and penetration coming in human mind into conflict with one another because they were destined to do so. Human beings do not understand the nature or intention of the fate or destiny as a result they suffer. Human beings are being victimized by the cruel hand of fate.

Fate and Circumstances in the Victorian Fictions

As the Victorian novels are highly influenced by a kind of unseen power called fate, fate in Victorian fictions plays a pivotal role upon the lives of its people. Human beings are sketched as poor, innocent, helpless and introvert creatures and on the other hand they are forcefully dominated by their circumstances and their own destiny. Most of the Victorian novels are guided by the fate which plays a larger part in order to determine the fortune of the characters. Hardy's popular Wessex novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) where human life is severely dominated by the blind fate which manifests the heroine, Bathsheba Everdene is stunned by the false love of Sergeant Troy that causes two influential consequences in the novel. The first is the force that has delayed the pure love of farmer Gabriel Oak to be transferred into reality in marriage with Bathsheba and the second is the force that works out to give the retribution of death so Sergeant Troy from farmer Boldwood.

Similarly, Hardy's another renowned novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) where fate takes the shape of weather which shatters the protagonist, Michael Henchard's hopes of becoming rich and prosperous. He buys a lot of grain under the false impression of the fortune-teller prophesies of August being rainy and tempestuous so that he could sell all the grain at high profit. But weather is quite reverse and he eventually has to sell all the grain at great loss. Moreover, Henchard suffers in his whole life from his quality conscience of selling his wife. Sometime fate appears as some innate weakness of a character as in *Jude the Obscure* in which Jude's life is ruined because he has been endowed at birth with intensity of sexual temperament which he can not control. Jude Fawley is a rural stonemason, whose only chance of fulfilling his desires, seems to lie in his relationship when he meets his free thinking cousin Sue Bridehead.

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), fate is presented as chance in which Tess' parents' chance discovery of their decent from a once noble line sends Tess to seek the assistance of degenerate supposed relative. Alec D'Urberville by whom she is seduced and forced to leave the family in disgust. This event casts an awful lurking shadow through out her life and it becomes one of the sole causes of her demise at the end. One might argue that she would not have faced such unexpected and fatal blow of fate if she had not been sent to the relative, Alec D'Urberville.

Hardy's outlook on life is always gloomy and sad, so he is called a 'pessimist' among the novelists. His conception of life is essentially tragic. Characters, in his novels, suffer because of the mischievous workings of some unseen power and the characters' own weakness which Hardy terms 'fate'. There is a struggle between the men on the one hand, and on the other an omnipotent and different fate- that is Hardy's interpretation of the human situations. Fate plays an active role in the life of character. There is a conflict in the novels but the conflict is not between one man and another or between man and an institution. Man, in Hardy's novels, is ranged against impersonal forces, the forces conditioning his fate.

Quoting Hardy's arguments about life, David Cecil in his book *Hardy the Novelist* (1993), maintains like this:

The universe was a huge impersonal mechanism, directed by some automatic principle of life unknown, pursuing its mysterious end, utterly different to the feelings of mortals. Men would grow to care less for physical beauty; what was physical beauty but a mockery in a world wasting hourly to decay. (24)

Besides these, man is working to one end, destiny to another. These ends may coincide or they may not. It is destiny that decides what shall happen. Man cannot modify its will.

No other novelists than Hardy has much more exercised the roles of chance and love in his novels before. Chance and love have always had a conspicuous influence on the course of events. In his novel *The Return of the Native* (1878), Mrs. Yeobright pays a visit to her son, Clym Yeobright for reconciliation, but the visit takes place at a moment when, by an unlucky combination of circumstances, Eustacia cannot admit her. As a result, Mrs. Yeobright goes away to die. Hardy aims at showing that Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia, in their struggles for happiness, are alike up against the process of fate which takes no account of their feelings and may therefore make a move- from a pure caprice to their efforts futile.

In a harsh world, he sees man a thirsting for happiness and imagining that he will find it by love in some form or another. Love, according to him, is a blind, irresistible power, seizing on human beings whether they will or not; intoxicating in its inception, but mostly bringing ruin in its train.

The novelist always seems more sympathetic towards the female characters than male ones. He makes them suffer in the hands of some unseen and transcendental power. Their efforts and trials are in vain before the supreme power which mostly acts against them. Females' fortunes, to some extent, are determined by the male ones as the fortune of Fanny Robin in *Far From the Madding Crowd* by Sergeant Troy, Susan Henchard's in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Michael Henchard and of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Alec D'Urberville and Angel Clare. Even males in these novels are not the master of their fortune. They are, rather, made to perform their roles guided by some hidden power. That is why, they are tortured and helpless. His male characters seem less sympathetic and pitiable because their innate weakness is highlighted more for their own sufferings. It is not that the women characters are paragon themselves; they have their own short comings as innate weakness in Hardy's words but they are not always kept on the front bench.

There is a cycle of the movements of characters' fate in Hardy's novels. Characters may be able to change their fortune with their efforts for sometime but after sometime they come back to the previous miserable and sorrowful condition they have gone through. In this respect, they are different from the typical characters of the modern literary fiction.

Another noteworthy feature that Hardy has brought into use exclusively in his novels is the introduction of the heroes and heroines who are not from high rank, but from amongst the common people. They are Tess, a milkmaid and hard-driven general farmer and the daughter of a haggler; Jude Fawley, stonemason and sometimes barker's assistant; Gabriel Oak, a shepherd; Michael Henchard, itinerant hay-trusser. These four, the very greatest of the heroes and heroines, are all drawn from the common place walks of life. In a sense, this is Hardy's special contribution to the spirit of the age- democracy. In this way, his power in portraying the characters is undoubtedly remarkable.

Hardy is deeply affected by science. He is a realistic observer of the human condition in which there is immutability of nature on the one hand, and on the other the mutability of human beings. In such situation, characters' struggles for their betterment do not show any improvement, rather they become completely useless. More than these, stories are woven with the cycle of the incidents in the life of characters which Michael Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, calls 'the turn and turn about' (260). He says so when he becomes completely destitute without having any livelihood after his wealth and property has been auctioned and sold. In the

beginning, he is a joker seeker hay-trusser and he, even at the end, in spite of his great achievement of mayor hood of Casterbridge in the middle, has to leave the town simply as a hay-trusser again to seek for the ultimate destination-death.

In his novels, fate and its workings and intrigues are the stable themes. The stories are put forward with the hard blows of fate on the characters and their utmost efforts and endeavors to escape from them. Instead of getting rescue, they find themselves more and more entangled in the network of cruel fate. Their whole life is devoted and given up in the struggles against their antagonistic fate.

The subject of this study is fate and its role in the life of man with reference to Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Fate is generally defined as the power believed to control all events in a way that can't be resisted- that is something inevitable. The reference of human fate is found in several religious and secular texts. In *The Bible*, man is born to suffer and die because of his disobedience to God. Some discussions on fate can also be found in some Hindu scriptures. In *The Gita* "Karma" is always focused as everything that guides and determines one's fortune. Some fragmentary references about fate are there in the later composed books like *Panchatantra* (1961), *Nitishatakama* and *Hitopadesa* (1974). In *Nitishatakama*, Bharthari, the poet and grammarian, argues, "What has been written before one's birth is unavoidable just like the tree without new leaves even in the spring, the owl without sight even in the daylight and the "bird" without water even in the rain" (37).

From fatalistic perspective, there is no free will or choice in decision making. It is fate that always has upper hand to decide the events take place. If something is completed, it is because it is fated to complete. One's circumstances have been determined by a supreme deity; that their lives have been fated. Fate is often linked with the sum total of one's "Karma", actions one has done in his previous life. If one is happy and successful, it is because one must have earned this in the previous life, "Karma" literary means actions in the present or in the previous life. But the role of one's own personal actions in influencing "Karma" is neglected and instead, "Karma" is thought to be predestined and as something which can not be altered in any way.

An Outline of the Victorian Period

The Victorian period started in the 1830s which can be divided into two literary sub periods; high Victorian literature (1830-1880) and late Victorian literature (1880-1920). This period has some characteristics of romanticism. But significant difference that can be seen in this period is sense of spiritualism. This age is mainly dominated by the feeling of morality and rationality, which is supposed as the revolt against the materialistic tendencies. In this period sense of pessimism and human dilemma prevails in most of the novels. According to the pessimistic belief, fate is the determiner factor of all the things. It says that men can do nothing of their own because everything is pre-destined and human beings are destined to do what the fate reinforces them to do. Henry Thomas and Donelee Thomas present, "The world awoke to the existence of a great gentleness that stemmed out of a great sadness" (97). In this period, there are some people having very simple, innocent, rustic and noble lives with vivid picture of then society, which is reflected in the literary works of that time. David Cecil, in his book *Hardy, the Novelist* says, "In Victorian novel a hundred different types and classes, persons and nationalities hostile to each other across the shadow screen of our imagination" (26).

It can be said that Victorian novels are marked by lack of uniformity, which is an extraordinary mixture of strength and weakness. Plot constructions are also shown improbable and melodramatic which have made their ending convention. In spite of being a lot of merits we cannot see very high artistic standard there in Victorian novels. Novels of Victorian era are successful in amusing their readers with the

mixture of irony as well as humor. So, it can be said that this period has a mixture of many artistic features, which have their own values and importance. Literary contributions of great values are found in this period with the sense of fatalistic trend.

CHAPTER TWO

Fatalism in Hardy's Novels

Hardy as a Pessimist

According to *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (1996), Pessimism is described like this, "Pessimism is an inclination to emphasize adverse aspects, condition, and possibilities on to expect the worst possible outcomes. It is the philosophical doctrine that reality is essentially evil or evil overbalances happiness in life" (45).

Similarly, *Oxford English Dictionary* writes:

It is the tendency or disposition to look at the worst aspect of things, the habit of taking the gloomiest view of circumstances, antithetical to optimism. It is the worst condition of degree possible or conceivable in the state of greatest deterioration.(66)

Likewise, *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* indicates thus:

The tendency to see or anticipate only what is disadvantageous or futile in current or future condition of actions, often when it is reasonably possible to see or anticipate advantages or gain. According to this pessimism is concerned with. The belief that the evil and pain in the world is not compensated for by goodness and happiness. (312)

Pessimism is related to supernatural power that always believes in fatalism and the existence of chance and coincidence in human life. It is the superstitious belief that always sees the dark and gloomy side of human life and the world. Pessimism is the spiritual feeling which comes from within the human soul; believing in God's existence, domination over human beings. Pessimism believes that life has the tragic theme, and man should always remain unsatisfied, unhappy, sad and unpleasant because of their subordination. Human beings have no control over their lives and there is something unseen which controls them. So, they should be suffered a lot by the hand of the cruel fate: a divine agent. Everything happens unplanned because they are pre-destined and pre-disposed by the fate.

Hardy is known as a pessimistic novelist of the Victorian era. The term pessimism denotes that side of human attitude and belief, which sees completely the negative aspects of human life. When a person does not see a brighter future in his/her life then it is supposed to be pessimism. Hardy has often been attacked by the critics as a novelist dealing only with the dark side of life. According to his concept people mostly believe in the dark side of the life and think that man is born to this earth to suffer and to be unhappy. This belief produces an impression of malicious fate in human mind which breaks away their expected and desired wishes and happiness. Pessimism mostly believes in the supernatural power, which seems to operate human desires and ambitions blindly towards the darker side and most often in a hostile manner to the happiness of all the human beings. Fate, which makes its appearance in the use of chance and coincidence which is the most powerful thing that tends to dismantle human pleasure. So we are controlled by the unseen power which we call fate. Men are the victims of fate where it mostly gives pain to the people just like a child playing with a butterfly and gives suffering and pain to it. Human beings are like puppet in the cruel hands of the fate.

Pessimism is one of the philosophical doctrines, which lays a great importance on the role of divine forces of supernatural power rather than the role of human beings

in their lives. Men can do nothing of their own as per their wishes because everything in the universe is out of the reach of human beings and which are pre-disposed or pre-decided by the unforeseen fate. Pessimism is the idea in the human minds which believes that the reality is not the reality but only the shadow of illusion. It is because the reality is the irony of fate. We are conditioned and controlled by time and causality of which we don't have to do anything to defeat time rather it defeats us time and again. Time and causality are the blind forces, which judges human beings; therefore they trace the melancholy aspect in the life of the people.

Pessimism sees no hope in the life and it thinks that life is full of pain, suffering and ups and downs, fluctuations and vacillations. When pessimism underlines in a human mind, then people think themselves subordinate of the divine forces. People think that they are not independent and they cannot do what they like to, it never allows happening what they wish to be or to gain. Fate, which is considered as invisible force, is the sole determination of all the things in which it always exercises and experiences everything. Men suffer and are forced to suffer because they have no controls over any matters. They have no control over their destiny and everything moves ahead according to the time and causality, which is in away fate itself. People feel subordinate and dependent to fate or God since it has full control over human lives. Everything happens as a matter of chance.

Hardy Thomas and Donalee Thomas write in a book named *Living Biographies of Famous Novelists*, about Thomas Hardy and his philosophy pessimism. "Heaven knows who! All life is thus a comedy of errors in the realm of affection. Everybody who is loved; loves somebody else, but it is the curse of all lovers that no two of them ever love each other" (125). So, critics explain pessimism as a new king of beauty "a negative beauty of tragic tone" and negative connotation of possible God. Pessimism does not stand in favor of poetic justice. Even the people without their own faults have to suffer, if they are destined to. Hardy is of the view that good and bad suffer at the same time with out any reasonable difference. It does not blame or criticize to human destiny and views that God is mocking and teasing on the human beings. It does not believe that the work is not ruled by reason, it is moving haphazardly, unsystematically and in a much unplanned way; just they happen without any order or sequence. Hardy believes that chance or coincidence is frequently happening matters in everybody's life. Fate and chances have also to do with human tragedy and indifferent types of suffering to make their lives worthless and meaningless.

In the novel *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's characters experience frustration even if they do not have any significant causes for it. In the novel, the main character or the title character named Jude Fawley a rural, poor, innocent and introvert stonemason is badly frustrated by poverty and the indifference of the academic institutions at the university of Christminster, his only chance of fulfillment seems to lie in his relationship with his unconventional, free thinking cousin, Sue Bridehead. But life as social outcasts proves undermining and when tragedy occurs, Sue has no resilience and Jude is left in despair.

Most of Hardy's novels, characters have presented the destiny as an inevitable chance in which they are destined to suffer. Sometime they are compelled to give up their happiness for others. Hardy, in most of his novels, has presented the dominant role of fate over individual will and aspiration, which has not given any place in their lives for their fulfillment. He makes his novel *Jude the Obscure* tragic from the point of view of fate's decisive role and shows that it is the inevitable design of fate for their sufferings because of others insensitive and impulsive behavior. Hardy has shown the inner conflicts in characters' mind, which is also shown as being destined

to do so. Hardy tries to show that destiny decides what shall happen in human life because it is already decided why they should suffer.

Phelps, talking about Hardy as pessimist, observes thus:

As a spectator of human history, he sees life as a vast tragedy with men and women emerging from nothingness, suffering acute physical and mental sorrow and passing into nothingness again. To his sympathetic mind the creed of optimism is a ribald insult to the pain of humanity and devout piety merely absurd. (405)

The same critic further argues that Hardy's writings do not show any sign of cynicism at all. For sufferings and miseries of man, other men are not responsible but it is God who is exclusively responsible for them. So, he never has any complain against other fellows who are equally helpless and powerless before omnipotent God.

Hardy's Concept of Tragedy

Hardy is known as a tragic novelist. His novels are basically influenced by the Greek tragedy in which some unseen power and moral conflict are responsible for the sorrow and suffering as well as the destruction of the characters. Moreover, Hardian tragedies are village tragedies composed of the drama of broken love and wronged girls, the feuds and the hangings, which have filled his early memories. They are full of true lovers, and forlorn maidens and dashing Don Juans. In *The Trumpet Major* (1880), tragedy occurs due to the lack of good judgment of the pretty girl who chooses handsome instead of a gay sailor. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess, the beautiful innocent maiden is betrayed by the wicked seducer who ends her life on the gallows tree. In *Jude the Obscure*, instinct and intellect engage in an unequal combat. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Bathsheba with no evil intent unseats the reason of a good man and falls herself to be a victim to a fickle rascal. Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, is the victim of his own strength and insolent triumph. In this way, tragedies in the life of characters occur due to the external forces that are beyond the characters' control, male domination over female and the internal faculty of the characters--the innate weakness.

Even in *The Trumpet Major* or *Far From the Madding Crowd*, love does not achieve a happy fruition; it is shadowed with sadness. It is a major key, twilight serenity that closes the drama of Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak, Anne and Bob Love day may be happy but their happiness is overcome at the expense of John, the noblest of the three.

Hardy sees human beings less as individual than as representatives of species, and in relation to the ultimate conditioning forces of their existence. His theme is mankind's predicament in the universe. There is plenty of tragedy in the life of the Wessex laborers with its poverty and passions. It is not that characters do not try their best to bring the unfavorable situations into their favor but their efforts prove powerless before their cruel fate. Fate mostly acts villainous role and pushes the characters into such quagmire from where escape is impossible.

Hardy's novels are pre-dominantly set in rural areas, which Hardy named The Wessex. It is the perfect picture of his own society where people seem to suffer from various hardships and inadequacies. About the Wessex life and its portrayal on Hardy, David Cecil writes:

There are plenty of tragedies in the life of the Wessex laborers with its poverty passion of life to them was life in the raw, dependent and ignorant exposed alike to the oppression of the school system and the caprices of the weather at every moment of their existence. The people

among whom Hardy was brought up were made conscious of man's helplessness in the face of circumstances. Hardy was the man to realize that the tragedy is implicit in such a life. Since the world he looked at seemed to full of pains and disappointments. He argues that pain and disappointment were outstanding characteristics of human existence. (106)

Hardy in his Wessex novels has shown the forces of nature, which combine human destiny. Men and women in Hardy's fiction are not masters of their fate. Instead they are found to be at the mercy of the indifferent forces which manipulate their behavior and relation with others. In the society, there are poverty stricken people who are compelled to live in the miserable and contemptible way.

People of rural area are oppressed by the injustice prevalent in the society of the time. So, tragedy is caused due to the excess poverty. People are dominated by so-called upper class people as well as social laws, customs and traditions. They are as helpless and deceived as Hardy created in his literary works. Hadrian characters are full of agonies and disappointments. He argued that pain, melancholy and disappointment are equally attributed in the real wessex dweller and the characters in his works. They are equally destined to pass the hard lives. Days of rustic people go very pitiable and unjust way. Weather, fate, marriage, destiny appear to be against them. Moreover, trouble after trouble, hardships after hardships, sufferings, melancholies and discontentment are presented in a very subtle way in human life.

Comparison and Contrast with Reference to Fate in Hardy's Novels

An attempt had been made to find similarities and differences with respect to fate among his novels. *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*. In all his novels, fate appears in different forms. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Michael Henchard's plans for making himself rich are frustrated by bad harvest where fate appears as a natural force. Sometimes fate appears as some innate weakness of characters.

Jude the Obscure (1895) deals with the theme of marriage and mischievous acts of fate in the life of protagonist, Jude Fawley. Hardy, in his novel, seems to have had a negative attitude towards the marriage system. Remote as the novel may seem from the pastoral world of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the presence of Gray's elegy can still be felt.

In *Thomas Hardy the Critical Heritage* (1970), a reviewer remarks:

Hardy's notion of fate begun shaping itself while writing *Tess* to be not a mere blind force that happens at times to upset man's calculations and to turn their strength into weakness, but rather a spiteful providence whose special delight is to score off men and whose proceedings make anything but the absolute quietism as absurdity, becomes a predominant in *Jude the Obscure*. (Cox 250)

As in other novels of Hardy, men, in *Jude the Obscure*, are made miserable by the combined efforts of destiny and society. His characters have the habit of combining obedience to their wishes with the obedience to the society. Sue and Jude may have been right in their destination and abandonment of the marriage tie but society and destiny so not accept their conduct in the same way that they do. The

other cause of his ill fate is the contrast between the ideal life who wishes to lead and the squalid real life he is fated to live. Jude feels his life filthy with Arabella and he comes in contact with an educated girl, Sue Bridehead, but his life is not happy and peaceful even with her.

J.Hills Miller, in the introductory note to Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure*, talks about the catastrophe of the characters thus:

Jude's mixture of naïve idealism and sexual need, Sue's instinct to bring men closer and closer to her and then reject them; Sue has already destroyed one man when Jude meets her, an undergraduate with whom she lived and whose death she has caused by holding out against him so long at such close quarters? Sue destroys Jude in the same fashion. (xix)

Sue breaks Jude's heart by pushing him away when they are physically near. Then she writes him ten little notes and kisses him before she sends him away to death. Sue's nature in combination with Jude's leads her step by step to a wretched life in Philloston's arms and Jude step by step to his cursing of himself at the moment of his death in words from Job, "Let the day perish where in I was born, the night in which it was said there is a man child conceived" (226).

Hardy expresses his concern on the cause of Jude's suffering due to his instincts towards woman:

It was obvious that man could not live by work alone; that the particular man Jude, at any rate, wanted something to love. Some men would rush incontinently to her, snatched the pleasure of easy friendship which she could hardly refuse, and have left the rest to dance. No so Jude at first. (116)

Arabella, when Jude was ill and Sue was earning some livelihood by selling cakes, comes to them and expresses her willingness to own Jude and her submissive to the acting of God, "He [Jude] is very good hands that I know I am not the woman to find fault with what the Lord has ordained, I have reached more resigned frame of mind" (372). Sue, after the death of her children reminding Jude their one year happy life, criticizes the blow of fate on the instincts of man for pleasure thus:

I said it was nature's intention. Nature's laws and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instinct she afforded us—instinct which civilization has taken upon itself to that. What dreadful things I said, and how fate has given this stab in the back for being such fools as to take nature at her word. (405)

Jude, consoling and comforting Sue, expresses his sense of eternity of the things in the universe, "Nothing can be done. Things are as they are, and will be brought to their destined issues" (405). This concept of Hardy is similar to the concept of eternity and the fate of something in Hindu philosophy. Bishwanth Sharma, in his book, *Hitopadesa* (1974), says that if it is to be can never be, and if it is to be can never be otherwise. So it should be taken seriously (13). After the most tragic situation of their children's death, Sue and Jude have turned to their normal life. After sometime, Sue speaks her sense of defeated feelings before God, "We must conform all the ancient wrath of the power above us has been vented upon us; His poor creatures and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!" (409). Jude, supporting in the same context, says, "It is only against man and senseless circumstance" (410). Then, Sue, out of excessive frustration, says, "I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten! We are made a spectacle unto the world and to the angles, and to men!" (410)

Hardy's another masterpiece *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), is generally accepted as the first successful novel of him. It depicts a real picture of the leisurely tale of the countryside, Dorset, the simple and straightforward farmers, their rich cultures and traditions and the spectacular idyllic beauty of the region.

The title of the novel is derived from a line of Thomas Gray's (1716-1771) from *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* and the characters are named after the biblical figures. The role of the fate in the life of major as well as minor characters is very significant in the novel. The protagonist, Gabriel Oak's hopes of becoming rich and prestigious farmer and marrying his beloved, Bathsheba Everdene, is delayed due to some external as well as internal forces. The external forces that are beyond his control always act against his hopes and aspirations. Even if they seem to work in favor of him that is nothing but the fainting light that makes him more confused and non plus. Besides these, Gabriel has his own weakness also which he can never realize and correct. David Daiches, a critic and historian, opines thus:

Far From the Madding Crowd uses a wider canvas and takes a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. There is still an idyllic element present, but misfortune, coincidence and the intrusion into the pastoral scene of an element of sophisticated selfishness from the outside world combined to make this love story much more tangled and violent in its light and shade. (175)

Far From the Madding Crowd is a love story of a simple shepherd, Gabriel Oak and an independent and proud farmer Bathsheba Everdene and the sadistic role of fate in the life of all characters. So far as the performance of fate with respect to Gabriel's life is concerned, it is manifested more as the external forces than his own innate weakness. It is fire in the guise of fate that works in favour of Gabriel. When he gets suffocated inside his cottage due to the burning stove his dogs howl and howling makes Bathsheba come and nourish him. This event casts a profound impression into the heart of a simple farmer. He, from the very moment, starts burning with the longing of Bathsheba. But he lacks tact to please a woman, not by kissing her hand when she extends. Not only this, his weakness lies in his prompt propose to Bethsheba for marriage. He does not think of winning her heart before the proposal of marriage without being familiar with her resembles the situation of Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess hesitates to tell her past before Angel Clare when he is curious to know about it but it has become too late when she discloses it. In both situations, work is not done in proper time. Angel Clare gets shrunk with the dark past of Tess and decides at once not to sleep in the same room with Tess. In Gabriel's case, Bathsheba persistently rejects him when he goes to court her with a present of lamb.

It is the male in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* who plays the ruthless part to damage the female's life where as it is the female in *Far From the Madding Crowd* who plays an impetuous part to torture and make male sad. But one thing is common in both novels that one's role in determining other's fate. Gabriel's fate is linked with his dog too. It is his dog that creates an atmosphere to bring him close contact with Bathsheba and it is the same dog which brings misfortune to him by causing death of two hundred sheep. The second event in an indirect way plays the role key to keep Gabriel away from Bathsheaba. In this way, the same thing in different time causes different results. It is similar to the role of the weather in the life of Micahel Henchard and Donald Farfrae in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It is the weather that shatters the hero, Henchard's hopes of becoming a rich by being quite reverse to his expectation but it is the same weather which does not cause any loss to his nearest rival, Donald Farfrae. Gabriel for the first time seems weak and defeated in his life before his fate after a great loss of his two hundred sheep. Hardy, capturing the upset mood of

Gabriel's submissiveness to fate, writes, "Thank God, I am not married what would she have done in the poverty now coming upon me?" (30)

After this tragic incident, Gabriel visits various places in search of job as bailiff he has once been. This situation of Gabriel is similar to that of Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in which he becomes an itinerant job seeker hay-trusser. But there are also some differences between their situations; Gabriel has been turned to a poor farmer from his progressive state but it is not with Henchard. The story of Henchard does not make his earlier state of life clear before he has become an unemployed hay-trusser. The second difference is that Gabriel is single person without any burden of the family where as Henchard is with his wife, Susan Henchard and daughter, Elizabeth-Jane. In such condition, it is fire as the fate that provides chance for Gabriel to work near his beloved, Bathsheba Everdene who has been endowed wit has good amount of money and property due to her uncle's death in another village.

Gabriel gets job in Bathsheba's farm, which he thinks the best chance to make a room for him in her heart. One might as well estimate how miserable and pathetic Gabriel's life is to be merely an employee in the farm of his beloved. But he forgets his all with the strength of self-sacrifice and self-effacement only for the sake of true and pure love. He leaves an attempt to please her but his every attempt becomes feeble and fragile. Not only that, it is due to his ill fate, Gabriel should pass through very hard and heart-rending experiences of life. He becomes a mere mute eye-witness lover of the absurd and false romance between his beloved and other two men- Sergeant Troy and farmer Boldwood. Gabriel, as a well wisher, ventures once to denounce the character of Troy but she does not take it seriously. He has also a ring sight view of the quarrel and fight of the men for the same woman, Bathsheba Everdene. Like wise in *Jude the Obscure*, two men, Jude Farwey and his nearest rival Richard Philloston exercise and fight for the same woman, Sue Bridehead.

Bathsheba, at the beginning, is favored by her fate because she has got a lot of properly from her uncle. She being an independent young and smart woman, starts feeling a sense of pride and prejudice which becomes the cause of her agonizing state of life in coming days. It is Bathsheba who affects the fate of three men: Gabriel Oak, Sergeant Troy and farmer Boldwood. In *Jude the Obscure*, Sue too destroys or affects the fate of two men: Jude Farwey and Richard Philloston side by side. In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Troy gets retribution of death for his wrong deeds; he has committed in the lives of Fanny Robin and Bathsheba Everdene. And Boldwood gets life long imprisonment for his murder of Troy out of extreme emotion and excitement. Gabriel lives the most tortured life till he gets united with Bathsheba. In this way, it is found that one's fate is not determined only by oneself but also by different persons who are associated with the one.

Bathsheba's fate is largely fixed by her own innate weakness that is the lack of taking right decisions in the right time. She commits such mistakes not once or twice but many times which become later on more complicated for her to correct. In the beginning, she cannot understand the sacred and tender feelings of Oak and she persistently rejects his proposal for marriage outright. It is the second time, she makes mistake by giving job to Gabriel Oak in her farm. Had she wanted to be away from him, she would not have kept him as the bailiff. Thus, she goes on making mistakes upon mistakes and invites her own agonizing state in which she has to see her husband. Troy goes mad after the love of some other girl. Troy not only wrongs her but also squanders her money recklessly throughout his life. Even then it is her fate in the form of her innate weakness that prevents her from recognizing him as a trickster. He plays with Bathsheba but loves truly some other girl named Fanny Robin. The

saying, "As you sow, so shall you reap," proves true in the case of Troy who has amassed so many sinful deeds that at last he gets death for his punishment. This context resembles both the Hindu and Buddhist ones. In Hindu Philosophy even gods are not free from their fate-that is they must reap the fruit of their actions.

Hardy's another novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, generally regarded as tragic masterpiece, is a story of innocent and sophistication of man and nature and of history and its relation to the present. It is concentrated on the fate of a simple country girl, Tess whose parents' chance discovery of their descent from once noble line sends her to seek the assistance of a degenerate supposed relative by whom she is seduced. Irving Howe has more recently compared this novel to Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress* (1678) in its structure that of a journey in which each place of rest becomes a test for the soul and the function of plot is largely to serve as an agency for transporting the central figure from one point to another.

The protagonist, Tess' fate is to a great guided by the two men-Alec D'Urberville and Angel Clare. Alec sacrifices her to his lust where as Angel deserts her to his theory of womanly purity. The first obeys the natural law; the second a social law. The novelist, Hardy has no hesitation in assigning to the latter the greater blame. Mowbray Morris, talking about Tess' fortune observes, "For the first half of his story, the reader may indeed conceive it to have been Mr. Hardy's design to show how a woman essentially honest and pure at her will through the adverse shock of fate, eventually rise to higher things" (218). Michael Millgate, a biographer critic of Hardy, analyzing the causes of Tess' ill fate, remarks thus:

Hardy is entirely ambiguous in handling Tess' ultimate responsibility for her most decisive acts- the sexual surrender to Alec's failure to confess to Angel, the second surrender to Alec and the murder because Hardy no where suggests that Tess is right to do these things. (280)

The novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, is the masterpiece of Thomas Hardy which contains lots of fatalistic scenes and issues. The novel has tragic ending in the sense that Boldwood and Fanny Robin who are very much sincere in their duties and have their own identity lose their lives because of Sergeant Troy's follies and Bathsheba's lack of proper judgment. This novel lacks poetic justice where fate compels the characters to suffer even if they are not supposed to suffer because of their deeds. Here, fate plays an important role in this novel. When Troy seeks to live a happy life with Bathsheba he is killed by Boldwood. He gets victimized of the malicious circumstance. Sergeant Troy who realizes his mistake after the fatal situation but it was too late. Bathsheba also meets a tragic end which illustrates fatalistic perspective of the author. If he had died before his realization of mistake that incident would not have been taken as tragic. When he realized his mistake he was really feeling sorry for it and wanted to live a life of remorse with Bathsheba but he met the fate he deserved at the end.

CHAPTER THREE

Fate and Its Manifestations

Thomas Hardy, a renowned English novelist, was fond of creating text which contained a sense of social reality, especially of rural lives and their sufferings. He was a regional novelist, preferably based on his own imaginary land 'Wessex' in which its people were underprivileged and ere compelled to live the lives of great hardship and insufficiency. Basically, he takes rustic and simple characters who suffer

and are destined to live under the control of indefinite and unseen fate, while playing their mere indecisive role throughout their lives. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is the novel, which depicts the way of life of rustic people associated with Higher Bockhamton, Southern part of England. Most of the characters including Gabriel Oak, Boldwood and Bathsheba are engaged in farming suffer immensely.

The real and lively rustic tradition of contemporary nineteenth century English society can be seen in this novel which reflects every aspect of the quiet landscape. Hardy, being brought up in a simple family of rustic area is conscious and well acquainted with rustic life style. R.G. Cox presents the situations in the following lines:

First the rural surrounding, the effect of weather and atmosphere, the laors of beasts and men, as the lambing of sheep and such mild struggle with nature's storms and rains. Next, there are the minor characters as sort of chorus of agricultural laborers, very helpless and very much taken up with themselves, as was the way the ancient chorus. Last, there are the main persons of the drama-the people in whose passions and adventures the interest ought to centre. (36)

Pointing out the rural setting, the people of that locality and their dwelling place regarding the novel's characters are their representatives, Peter Widdowson illustrates thus:

The scene is laid in a secluded agricultural country where the noise of the great industrial centers, comes as a distance murmur, the character belongs to the simplicity of an older and less sophisticated world but in these novels life is greater, nobler, more tragic, more fraught with tremendous issue... whatever may be the limitation or invested the tragedy of the individual existence is rounded with a sheep, is less to the essential elements of human life and characters. (18)

The male protagonist and the female protagonist of the novel first meet without prior introduction. Gabriel looks at Bathsheba coming in a wagon in a very strange way. She keeps on looking at the mirror and hides as if she is not seen by anybody. At the very movement, Gabriel passes by that way and sees her. Regarding this, the book *Critical Heritage* proves it as, "She is stealing a look at herself in a mirror, unconscious of the presence of young farmer Oak" (38).

Fate is an abstraction. It plays an active part in the human drama which cannot be avoided. It must be personified in some particular incarnation. Fate, in the novels of Hardy, appears in different forms such as Nature, chance, past or love.

Sometimes it expresses itself through some force of Nature. Usually Nature in Hardy remains indifferent to human suffering. Tess is violated in the lap of Nature. But Nature remains indifferent and unconcerned. Sometimes it exercises an active influence on the course of events. More often it is a spiritual agent, coloring the mood and nature of human beings. Egdon Heath plays a prominent part in *The Return of the Native*. It is largely responsible for the tragedy in the novel. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the very stars seem to be against Henchard the fair organized by him is ruined by unexpected rain. Henchard's plans for making himself rich are brought to naught by weather. Bad weather has been foretold and on that basis he made reckless purchases. But the weather cleared and he had to sell at a great loss. Then suddenly the weather changed again. Thus vagaries of weather ruined him financially. Thus Nature is an instrument of Fate in Hardy's novels.

In the works of no other novelist does chance play such an important influence on the course of event. Hardy has been blamed for this; and no doubt he dews sometimes overdoes it. But to condemn his use of chance altogether is to

misunderstand his views of life. We are witnessing a battle between man and Destiny. We do not understand the nature of Destiny. We cannot predict what will do. It often acts in the form of chance. Thus Tess suffers because the letter she had written to Angel on the eve of their marriage never reached him. By chance it slipped beneath the carpet. In *The Return of the Native*, Mrs. Yeobright pays a visit to her son for reconciliation, but at a moment when, by an unlucky combination of circumstances, Eustacia cannot admit her. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Farfrae arrives in Casterbridge just at a time when Henchard is being criticized for selling bad wheat. This changes the course of events in the novel. Thus chance plays an important role in Hardy's philosophy of life.

In Hardy's view, there is discord in life. Man is working to one end, Destiny to another. It is Destiny who decides what shall happen. Man cannot modify the will of Destiny. Many of Hardy's plots turn on the revelation of a past action coming to light after being kept secret for some time. This happens in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. By this method, Hardy shows how the fate of his characters is pre-determined by forces hidden from them. To the characters the past may be dead; they may have put their past actions behind them. But they cannot escape their consequences. For these actions, have become an instrument in the hands of Destiny-and which destiny may use feelings. Henchard's past action of selling his wife plays an important role in his fall. Similarly Tess' past ruins her life.

Love is another form in which Hardy incarnates Fate. All Hardy's novels are love stories. Love is the pre-dominating motive actuating his characters. Man seeks happiness through love. But his hope is vain. Because of love, so far from being a benevolent spirit, helping man in his struggle with the inhuman forces controlling human existence, is itself a manifestation of these forces. Love, as conceived by Hardy, is a blind, irresistible power, seizing on human being whether they will or not. It intoxicates a person in the beginning but brings ruin in the end. Women are the chosen victims of love. Love causes untold suffering to Elizabeth Jane, to Tess and to Eustacia. Even in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, when love does achieve a happy fruition, it is shadowed with sadness.

Interplay of Character and Destiny or Fate in Hardy's Novels

In the tragedies of Shakespeare "Character is Destiny" but in the tragedies of Hardy "Destiny is Character". His characters are not the architects of their fortune and nor can they influence their own actions. For them everything is determined. But then they have their tragic faults too just as the tragic characters of Shakespeare. Henchard is impulsive, Jude is ambitious, Tess is too innocent. Eustacia wants "to be loved to madness". Jude's flaw is an internal evil symbolized by instincts and emotions chiefly (a) sex-desire which is as blind a desire as the "will to live" and (b) ambition. These internal evils are greatly aggravated by external environment such as nature and society and modern scientific progress and these things appear positively as villains in the novels of Hardy. But there is one essentially great difference between the tragedies of Hardy and those of Shakespeare. 'Pity' is aroused by both writers; but whereas Shakespeare arouses 'awe' and 'healthy terror', the terror aroused in Hardy's novels very often degenerates into melodrama.

In Shakespeare, the flaw arises mainly from the romantic mould of the hero. It is in his power to curb it, but constituted as he is, he does not like to be otherwise; not so with Hardy-with whose characters there is the question of 'compulsion' and not of 'liking'. Environment and heredity compel Hardy character to follow a particular course of action. The father of Eustacia was a musician and her grand-father was a navy-man. She takes the refinement and the adventurousness of both and

consequently heredity are, in turn, helpless in the hands of some Supreme Power. The result is that the denouncement depends upon the ironical decision of some cruel 'chance'. The plots of all his stories depend on such chance happenings. "Accidents" according to Hardy, "are common enough in fact", though perhaps not in fiction. But if a tragedy is made completely dependent upon them, the universal impression of waste is so strong upon us that we grow indignant upon this whole scheme.

Fate and Man

A struggle between man on the one hand and, on the other an omnipotent and indifferent Fate-that is Hardy's interpretation of the human situation. Inevitably, it imposes a pattern on his picture of the human scenes. It determines the character of his drama. Like other dramas, this turns on a conflict, but the conflict is not, as in most novels between one man and another, or between man and an institution. Man in Hardy's books is ranged against impersonal forces, the forces conditioning his fate. Not that his characters themselves are always aware of this. Henchard is obsessed by his hatred of Farfrae; Bathsheba looks on Troy as the author of her misfortunes. But from the point of vantage from which Hardy surveys their stories, Bathsheba and Henchard are seen to be under delusion. For those whom they think their enemies are as much as themselves puppets in the hands of Fate.

Fate is ultimate responsible for their quarrels. Unless they were destined to do so, they would not be in conflict with each other. Not that Hardy refuses to make moral distinctions between his characters. On the contrary, his leading figures divide themselves into instruments for good and instruments for evil. The line between them is determined by their attitude to themselves. All alike are striving for happiness; but whereas Eustacia or Fitzpiers or Arabella strives with selfish passion, Gabriel and Tess and Giles are prepared to sacrifice their own happiness to ensure that of other people. These differences, however, in their characters do not affect the issue. That is in the hands of Fate. And indeed it is significant that Hardy-as a rule-emphasizes the fact that even those characters the world would call wicked are so much the creatures of circumstance that they are far more to be pitied than to be blamed. Henchard, for instance, seems on the face of it, faulty, enough violent, vindictive and uncontrolled. From that first chapter in which he sells his wife at the fair, until the end of the story when he deliberately conceals from Elizabeth-Jane the news of her father's arrival, lest she should wish to leave him, he acts in such a way as to justify an old-fashioned orthodox moralist in condemning him as the architect of his own misfortunes but Hardy does not look at him in this way.

Chiefly, however, the forces of Fate in Hardy's novels incarnate themselves in two guises-as chance, and as love. Of these, chance is the most typical. In no other novel does chance exercise such a conspicuous influence on the course of events. Hardy has been blamed for this: and no doubt, he does sometimes overdo it. But to condemn his use of chance altogether is to misunderstand his view of life. We are witnessing a battle between Man and Destiny. Destiny is an inscrutable force; we do not understand its nature or its intentions. And we cannot, therefore, predict what it will do. In consequence, its acts always show themselves in the guise of inexplicable, unexpected blows of chance. Mrs. Yeobright calls on a visit of reconciliation with her son at the one moment when, by an unlucky combination of circumstances, Eustacia, his wife, cannot admit her. In consequence, she goes away to die, unreconciled with him. This is not just a mere clumsy device to make the story end sadly. Hardy is out to show that Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia in their struggle for happiness, are alike up against the process of the universal plan, which takes no account of their feelings and may, therefore, make a move-from pure caprice, it may seem-which renders their efforts vain. Such apparent accidents are really as typical an expression of the nature

of Fate as Mrs. Yeobright's wish to make up her quarrel with her son is and expression of her nature.

The feeling of fatalism also runs through the works of this period although it, again, recedes before the more arresting Nature-characterizations with which the author is obsessed. An avenging Memesis seems to drive onward the tragic course of events after Bathsheba's thoughtless sending of the foolish Valentine to Boldwood, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and the white face of the dead Fanny Robin chastises the spirit of her successful but miserable rival with all the merciless rigour of the Mosaic law: 'Burning for burning; wound for wound, strife for strife'.

A Critical Response to *Far From the Madding Crowd*

Hardy's text has generated a large arena of criticism on both the contemporary and the recent time. Then the critics have viewed his text *Far From the Madding Crowd* as an influential and prospective on one hand and a complete failure on the other hand of another great writer. They have studied the text thoroughly in order to give their views in an analytical way so that no questions arose in their criticism.

One popular critic Mowbray Morris puts forward the balanced view about Hardy with reference to *Far From the Madding Crowd* in this way:

Mr. Hardy, though in some respects the best of our existing novelist, has not reached the degree of absolute merit which we once hoped he might do. He had a wonderful knowledge of the minds of men and women, particularly those belonging to a class which better educated people are often disposed to imagine has no mind, chiefly because of it cannot express itself with much fluency or lucidity. (Cox 133)

Similarly, another critic Jeanette King in his book *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel* (1978) emphasizes as:

It is not a question of deciding whether character is predestined or conversely that character determines destiny; each is equally true. In Novella's words, fate and character are but names for one idea, determined by heredity and environment to work out the individual's destiny. Character alone rarely determines destiny. (26)

The Role of Fate in the life of Protagonist, Gabriel Oak

Hardy's novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, is replete with the reference of fate and its misacting with the characters: Boldwood, Sergeant Troy, Bathsheba and other minor characters. It is, above all, the protagonist, Gabriel Oak who suffers badly in the hands of his antagonistic fate because there is a saying, 'A man proposes but the fate disposes.' He should face the blows of fate sometimes from different sides and sometimes from one side at the time, and they make him extremely desperate and sad in his life. He is always tortured by the sense of love and compassion and duty and morality, and of duty and humanity and pride and instinct. He has become a poor farmer from his progressive state. He is a single person who has no family burden to look after. The fate that provides chance for Gabriel to work endowed with a good amount of money and property due to the death of Bathsheba's uncle.

His fate leads him to be the shepherd of Bathsheba's sheep because of his sheep-washing and sheep-shearing quality where Hardy quotes, 'He found his opportunity in the death of a ewe, mother of a living lamb' (21). He gets job in Bathsheba's farm because of his skill to save wheel-rick from fire. One might think how miserable and pathetic Gabriel's life is to be a simple and poor farmer in his beloved's farm. But soon he forgets it all with the strength of self-sacrifice only for the sake of his true love. But he leaves no stone unturned to please her but his every attempt results to vain.

He is not merely a farmer but a determined man and waiting for the fate to come. Once, with full determination, he says to Bathsheba, ‘ I shall do one thing in this life-one thing certain-that is, love you, and long for you, and keep wanting you till I die’(26). But he passes through very hard and heart-rending experience of life because of his ill fate. He becomes a mere lover of the absurd and false romance between his beloved Bathsheba and other two men- Farmer Boldwood and Sergeant Troy. He is an eye witness of the harsh discussion of the two men for the same woman, Bathsheba Everdene. He becomes a lukewarm hearted because of the constant tussle of the two. And he regrets to know in his failure, ‘Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness’ (20).

Gabriel Oak leads a tortured life till he gets united with Bathsheba. In this way, it becomes clear that one’s fate is not determined only by oneself but also by different persons who are associated with. Thus, this concept of Hardian fate is similar to the concept of fate in the eastern perspective.

The Role of Fate in the life of a Woman: Bathsheba Everdene

Hardy makes female move in the wheel of a fate so female characters are more powerful, better and forceful than his male ones because females are nearer to the nature. His characters are all human beings who are not greater than their fate. He presents his characters with common human weakness and with common human virtues.

In the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Bathsheba, the chief female protagonist, is described as a disembodied creature. It is the story of Bathsheba Everdene and her three lovers: Gabriel Oak, Boldwood and Sergeant Troy who get circled in her love. She is one of the greatest heroines that Hardy has created who has a complex character. She has a number of qualities but she also has her shortcomings. When Gabriel feels the rejection of his true and deep love towards Bathsheba, in a genuine pathetic voice he says, ‘ I shall do one thing in this life-one thing certain-that is, love you ,and long for you, and keep wanting you till I die’(26). Here, Hardy demonstrates the controlling society of nineteenth century England when Gabriel falls in love to become her own person. Hardy describes Gabriel as a free spirit against an oppressive society, the ethereal against the common place and the material. In the mean time, Hardy depicts her as an imbued with a strong element of Victorianism which shows itself in her strong aversion to any sexual relation with the men.

Her fate has led to be in the circle of man. In her innocence, she hands over a valentine to Boldwood and forgets the matter completely. Later on Boldwood approaches her and reveals the matter she wrote and in the mean time she says in a regretting tone, ‘I-I didn’t –I know I ought never to have dreamt of sending that valentine-forgive me, sir...’ (100). Hardy, on the other hand, gives a sharp image of inconstancy in her. From the beginning, both in her major and minor actions, she seems reckless and then difficult; she is independent and then needs support; she is inviting and then stand-offish. Hardy never complains Bathsheba, she is simply existed and gives rise to multiple and totally conflicting impressions in our minds too.

The role of merciless fate can be observed in her charm and beauty. The first characteristic that we notice about Bathsheba’s character is her vanity. When she overcomes the heart of Boldwood, Gabriel, she feels proud but finally she confesses by saying, ‘I am afraid I have made a hole with my tongue that my heart will never mend’(134). Of course, she blushes at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushes the more. At the Casterbridge corn-market, she is the centre of attraction because she is the only woman there amid many farmers. She becomes very happy that everyone has fallen a victim to her charms. She regards it as a triumph of her beauty.

Bathsheba is very easily influenced by flattery. In fact, she loves to be flattered. It is by Troy's flattering compliments that he wins her heart. In a fatal state, Troy finds her and Hardy says, 'So a whimsical fate ordered that her hat should be taken off-veil and all attached-and placed upon his head, Troy tossing his own into a gooseberry bush'(141). Troy later on says that a woman like her is the cause of much unhappiness. He cannot think that Troy may have a motive in praying her. Hardy tells us that it was "a fatal omission" on Boldwood's part that he had never once told her she was beautiful where as she only told him 'MARRY ME'(77). So, Hardy's woman characters are badly constrained by the cruel nature of hidden forces.

Role of Fate in the Life of Sergeant Troy

Troy's fate is largely fixed by his own innate weakness-that is the lack of taking right decisions in the right time. He commits such mistakes not once twice but many times which become, later on, more complicated for him to correct. Regarding his fate, Hardy unfolds:

Fate had dealt grimly with him through the last four-and -twenty hours. His day had been spent in a way which varied very materially from his intentions regarding it. There is always an inertia to be overcome in striking out a new line of conduct-not more in ourselves, it seems than in circumscribing events, which appear as if leagued together to allow no novelties in the way of amelioration.(244)

Troy is introduced through Fanny Robin and the book gives very limited knowledge of him. Fanny writes to Gabriel of "a man of great responsibility and high honour"(72). First he seduces her but it is not known to others. In a snowy night, Fanny goes to meet Troy in his barrack but he says, 'What girl are you?'(68) but she replies, 'Your wife, Fanny Robin'(68). When she meets him, she reveals her affection and says, 'Yes, O Frank-you think me forward, I am afraid! Don't, dear Frank-will you-for I love you so. And you said lots of times you would marry me, and-and-I-I-I...' (69) but he comforts her that he would marry her and says, 'Don't cry, now! It is foolish. If I said so, of course I will' (69).

Troy experiences a deep feeling of remorse when he sees the dead body of Fanny Robin. He has made a sincere effort to keep his appointment with Fanny. The sight of Fanny's dead body arouses his conscience. He realizes that morally Fanny was his wife and merely a ceremony before a priest could not make Bathsheba his wife. He got a tombstone and written:

"ERECTED BY FRANCIS TROY
IN BELOVED MEMORY OF FANNY ROBIN" (253).

He felt that he could no longer live with his wife. But all this was a very poor compensation for the injustice he had caused to Fanny. His crime lay in not marrying her and he cannot be exonerated of his guilt. And his reform was a weak and temporary affair. Hardy remarks in the following lines about the fate regarding Fanny Robin, ' The sadness of Robin's fate did not make Bathsheba's glorious, although she was the Esther to this poor Vashti, and their fates might be supposed to stand in some respects as contrasts to each other' (232).

He chose flowers for Fanny's grave as a means of expressing his grief. After they are washed away he has to face the fact that matters don't always right themselves at some proper date. Troy not only wrongs Bathsheba but also squanders her money recklessly throughout his life. Even then it is her fate in the form of her innate weakness that prevents her from recognizing him as a philanderer. He plays with Bathsheba but loves truly Fanny Robin. The saying of the Bible, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"(Galatians.6:7) proves true in the case of Troy who has amassed so many sinful deeds that at last he gets death for his punishment. So, he has no moral strength to continue the reform in the face of adverse fate.

Troy is not a man who can stick to any woman. He is a selfish flirt. When Fanny goes to meet him at the barracks, he asks from the window, 'What girl are you?' (68). He has no real love for any woman. He cannot be forgiven for his desertion of Fanny. His treatment of Bathsheba also is very cruel. The motives which prompted him to return to Bathsheba are mean and selfish. He returns to her not because of any love for her but because he still finds her beautiful and wants her wealth. He met the fate he deserved.

In the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, one very gentle and rich farmer Boldwood suffers in a very tragic and pathetic way. He gets victimized by the circumstances which ultimately make him fall into a one-sided love with Bathsheba. He who never takes any interest in women becomes like a plaything for Bathsheba and Liddy. They do it for fun without caring about the consequences that would occur later. Liddy encourages and instigates Bathsheba to write a valentine when they all are sitting in the same church. Finally, Bathsheba writes and sends the letter, mentioning the following words:

The rose is red
The violet blue
Carnation's sweet
And so are you. (76)

Bathsheba not only writes the letter with some poetic verses but also seals with the inscription "Marry Me" outside. But the intention which is hidden behind the letter is not to marry him. They just try it to play mockery which shows their immature and inconstant nature. Boldwood one of the self reliant and hopeless men for a woman also becomes crazy when he sees that letter which is sent by Bathsheba on Valentine's Day.

The letter which they send to him is without any meaningful purpose. It shows their instinctive nature. Bathsheba's intention is just for her own fun-sake. According to R.G. Cox, 'She blows hot and cold upon farmer Boldwood a valentine with the words "Marry Me" on the seal. Her very selfishness makes her awkward and inconstant' (34).

As the story proceeds, the fates of Troy and Boldwood go side by side. Each affects the fate of other till one's death and other's life-long imprisonment. Sometimes one talks about another's fate. Sergeant Troy, in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, speaks about Boldwood's fate in a sarcastic tone thus:

Now Boldwood, yours is the ridiculous fate which always attend interference between a man and his wife. Fanny has long ago left me. I don't know where she is-I have searched everywhere. You say you love Bathsheba; yet on the merest apparent evidence you instantly believe in her dishonor. A fig for such love! Now that I have taught you a lesson, take your money back again. (185)

Fanny Robin, the most sympathetic character among others in Hardy's novels, has to pass through various ordeals of life. She has fallen into a poverty-stricken family by birth, perhaps it is due to this reason she works in other's farm from her teenage. Troy, a lustful rascal, taking advantage of her poverty as well as innocence, becomes able to victimize her. Her mistake to go to the church All Souls' instead of All Saints' is not, at any rate, in proportion to the blow of fate she has to bear in life.

Finally, he realizes and confesses his past sinful acts and says, 'I am weak and foolish, and I don't know what, and I can't fend off my miserable grief!.. and I feel it is better to die than to live!' (203). He has no sense of responsibility for his actions. He may seem to be

happy and successful but he is a vain dissembler, liar, callous, selfish, faithless, gambler and drunkard. He is bound for the fate he met.

CHAPTER FOUR CONCLUSION

Fate and its role in the life of human beings has been one of the subject matters of discussion or interest for the people of every walk since the evolution of human civilizations. There is a well known saying accepted by every religion which says, "A Man proposes but the Fate disposes."²⁹

The scholars and sages have spent a pretty much time to think over such an unaccountable power of fate and also some of them have given their own ideas and views about it. All over the world, western or non-western nations, the people from the statesmen to the common ones seem to have been highly affected by their own fate and circumstances. Every person, from the statesmen to the ordinary people-all used to go to the oracles, the palmists and the astrologers to know their future or fortune, so did the people in the world, not only in the past and are still doing so at present. Most of the people, simply before doing something important or going on some important journey, consult the fortune-tellers; one may call it 'faith' if one believes in some religious dogmas-that is Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc, while the other may call it traditional belief. But it is clear that it influences one either this way or that, so its prevalence cannot be denied altogether any way.

Here, fate is analyzed in different forms. We have different interpretations of fate. Some persons study fate as something like a carry-over of the actions in the previous life, so one's will and actions at present are not totally free but all are completely predestined. In other words, one's fate is determined according to one's actions and the fruit of one's present action is not beyond its limit. It is thus, the innocents sometimes suffer or they get such punishment for their guilt which can never be justified. The guilty ones also contrary escape from the punishment. In this condition, one's retribution is proved not on the basis of the present actions but it is on the basis of one's actions in the former life. In the formation of one's fate, various elements such as divine providence, human acts in the past, circumstantial situations

and time, work together or separately. Not only this, the fates of different people like parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives are responsible for determining a child's fate. It is the same fate that determines one's life, acquires wealth, knowledge and immortality. It seems one cannot reap the fruits of one's good or bad deeds in this life beyond the limit of the fruits of one's actions in the earlier life. One should do only the virtuous things now if one wants to spend a happy and prosperous life in the next.

The notion of fate determined by several factors discussed above does not resemble fully the concept of fate in Hardy's philosophy. Hardy is of the opinions that the action by which a man is governed is fate; one must reap the fruits of one's actions in the same life. Hardy does not talk about the impact of the actions of the previous life on the present fate. He seems, rather, to emphasize on the many actions. According to him, a man is the master of one's fortune or misfortune. In the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the protagonist's difficult and sorrowful condition is depicted miserably. He tried his best himself to make every attempt happy and cheerful but all are in vain.

Thomas Hardy, who served as a bridge between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the field of novel, is normally considered as a tragic novelist. The impact of Darwinism can also be viewed in this present novel and all his Wessex novels as well. Hardy, as a pure naturalist enquires on human behaviours, putting the characters amidst various forces and exploring how an innocent falls prey to the recurring struggle for life. In Hardy's masterpiece *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the protagonist Gabriel's struggle can obviously be depicted. In every step, fate or unforeseen circumstances does not support his deeds and ultimately he falls on the verge of the unavoidable arena. Human fate is a tragic according to Hardy. The characters wrestle with environment and at the same time in tune. The demands of society operate on human character. The weak are not blessed but are pushed to self destruction and the witty and clever are profited. In his fiction, physical environment, vain dissembler, callous, criminality, innocence, sexuality and other human oddities play a greater role. The disparity between man's nature and his destiny is the basic fact of man's subjection to time has been his true theme. Elementary passions like ambition, selfishness, love, faithless, jealousy, the thirst for knowledge and psychological intensity leads to conflict of contradictory wills guided by feelings. Accidents interrupt the course and fatal chance becomes the deciding factor. The interruption shows that an obscure cruelty lurks in the universe. The experimental revelation of laws which the individuals in their self-deception ignore and against which probably demands that they should be crushed. Hardy's novels look like the history which presents the accidents and incidents in the evolutionary society. So, his novel is a transcript of life—a transcript rooted in helplessness.

Hardy manifests the role of fate in various forms such as natural calamities, innate weakness and blind and handicapped love or chance. He sees the doings of nature like rain, fire, draught, etc in the natural forces; whereas the characters' own good or bad works partially reflect to their fortune or misfortune. Similarly, one's intricate love affair plays a vital role in deciding one's good or bad luck and the last but not the least important is the role of chance or situation or time in moulding one's life to some directions.

Fate is such a powerful force which determines the activities of a man as a whole. Things happen as what the fate wishes but not as what one wishes. From the fatalistic perspective, everything that happens in the world is predestined. It is impersonal; therefore, it does not know what results it bears in connection with an individual. No fate favors or acts against any one willfully but it seems so with respect to time and situation.

In the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Fate seems to have played the ruthless role to make the male protagonist, Gabriel Oak, paralyzed. He falls in love with Bathsheba. He proposes marriage to her but she rejects his proposal because of her vanity. But Oak declares, 'I shall do one thing in this life-one thing certain-that is, love you, and long for you and keep wanting you till I die'. His sheep are accidentally killed and he is employed by Bathsheba as a shepherd. The female protagonist, Bathsheba Everdene, is proud of her charm and beauty. She also falls in the hand of the fate that she rejects the true lover, Gabriel and gets attracted with Sergeant Troy who is a flirt, flatterer, liar, trickster and callous. Troy thinks woman as an instrument of pleasure.

Bathsheba has three lovers: Gabriel Oak, Sergeant Troy and Farmer Boldwood. These three lovers represent three different kinds of man's love for woman. Gabriel's ideal of love is loyal service to his beloved. Boldwood represents the passionate kind of love in which nothing but the complete union with the beloved satisfies the lover. Sergeant is a flirt. He represents the philandering type of love. He regards women as a source of pleasure. He love woman, enjoys himself and goes away. All these three lovers are attracted by the beauty and charm of Bathsheba but they lose their moral strength to continue the reform in the face of adverse fate.

Therefore, Hardy's outlook on life is always gloomy and sad. His concept of life is essentially tragic. Characters in his novels, suffer because of the mischievous acts of some unseen power and the characters' own weaknesses which Hardy terms 'Fate'. The main theme, which Hardy tries to give through this novel is that men and women are not masters of their fates but they are at the mercy of the indifferent forces which sabotage their efforts towards eternal bliss. The irony of life and love is shown in this novel where Hardy's characters are just scapegoats in the hands of indifferent forces of fate. Thus, it is apparent that fatalism is one of the most important aspects in the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* and therefore at one level, it is the documentation of his own philosophical doctrine.

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