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Commodification of the Female in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled **Commodification of the female in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*** submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U., Kirtipur by Achyut Raj Regmi has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This study of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* tries to unveil the female's position in patriarchal society under the title "Commodification of the Female in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*". Conditions of female characters are not better than the marketable commodity. They are controlled and deserted by the males who handle the property. Capitalistic mode of property distribution is inherited by patriarchal society and female are the victims of that mode. All the female characters are suffering from male domination caused by property handlings. So, to liberate them from such domination, economic distribution should be equalized and the concept of patriarchal superiority, which is caused mainly by property distribution, should be changed.

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1. Introduction

The Mayor of Casterbridge brings to light the harsh reality of Victorian society's treatment of female as an object. This aspect of the novel may be illustrated by comparing present-day society's conditions and attitudes towards women with how characters in the story treat female characters. Present research has met the crux or main idea that the title *The Commodification of Female in Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The word 'commodification' means reification or objectification, which means to convert mentally into a thing, "to materialize" something as an object. Commodification of female means treating women as an object or marketable thing, which is the concept of male members of the capitalist society. Women are dominated by males because of economic power which is the main cause of oppression upon women.

The mind of Henchard, representative of male, is shaped by capitalist ideology. He sells his wife and daughter just like capitalists sell the commodities in the market. He thinks that he can buy and sell the females just as capitalist can sell and buy the commodities. The capitalist ideology functions through market mechanism. Market, the self autonomous identity functions through demand and supply. Market doesn't have any duty, responsibility, morality and everything is a commodity, the saleable object in the market. When the buyer and the seller agree the exchange takes place. The capitalist ideology clamors that if both parties; buyer and seller agree free exchange is not a robbery. The important thing to be noted here is that the exchanged good is a female. This is the act of commodification where subject has been changed into an object. All human relationships come to be treated as commodities, a species of false consciousness characteristic of capitalist ideology.

In capitalist society, workers are used and treated as the capitalist want. Workers can be purchased and sold according to capitalists' desire. Capitalism, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependency, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between male and female, is the root of female's oppression. The gender inequality is reinforced ultimately by the capitalist mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and female's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression. In the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* female characters are dominated by male characters. This research is the study of male-female relation in terms of economic power position. Males are using the norms and values constructed by themselves on the basis of power relations which have the economic basis. The male's past as well as present behaviour towards female is an act of injustice.

Most of Hardy's criticism during this period focused on the best-known novels. In the 1970s Hardy studies progressed to structuralist and poststructuralist thinking, the latter including feminist, deconstructive, and Marxist interpretations.

Judith Mitchell offers a poststructuralist approach to Hardy's fictional heroines, concluding that the feminist reader of Hardy will necessarily feel ambivalent about his representation of women. She writes, "What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance" (186).

The female characters of Hardy's novel are presented primarily as objects of erotic interest. Perry Meisel assumes a Freudian orientation in his analysis of Michael Henchard's self-alienation and she writes:

With *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, we arrive at a full statement of Hardy's universe. "The story is more particularly a study of one man's deeds and character than, perhaps, any other of those included in my Exhibition of Wessex life" (author's preface). The definitive statement of Hardy's achievement in *The Mayor* [*The Mayor of Casterbridge*], a pronouncement of central importance to the body of his fiction, occurs directly after Donald Farfrae's crucial dismissal by Henchard and the Scotsman's establishment of his own business. (99)

The criticism written about *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has been the most interesting so far, and it has also been the most likely to deal with the issue of male homosocial desire. Concerning on this issue Elaine Showalter writes in her essay "The Unmanning of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*" that feminist critics must look at the male characters in order to properly understand Hardy. She further writes "Men like Henchard grow only once they have identified with women" (55). Showalter concludes by arguing that the end of the novel is positive for Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae because they will lead the town together. Most of Showalter's arguments are compelling.

Tod E. Jones in "Michael Henchard: Hardy's Male Homosexual" argues that Henchard is, at the very least, insecure about his masculinity. Jones feels Henchard may be an example of the male homosexual, "an ultra-masculine embodiment of male centered desire" [...] because Henchard will not acknowledge his desires, he "loses his sense of self [. . .] and [this] will ultimately result in his premature loss of life" (10-12).

Dana Elizabeth Allingham analyzes the role of women in Victorian society and the way how they are treated by the male. She immensely indicates in her essay

“The Social Role and Treatment of Women in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*” that:

Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) brings to light the harsh reality of Victorian society's treatment of women. This aspect of the novel may be illustrated by comparing present-day society's conditions for and attitudes towards women with how characters in the story treat Susan Henchard, Lucetta Templeman, and Elizabeth-Jane Newson. (16)

Only in recent years critics have begun to look at masculinity itself as contingent and changing rather than as normative and stable. Brady concluded her essay by calling for more research, “Hardy’s fiction offers great potential for an analysis of a gender framework in which women are the mediating link between men” (107).

In this way, several critics have interpreted it differently. But they do not unfold the issue of women’s objectification. In the novel, Henchard sells his wife and daughter in five shillings though he loves them very much. This is the act of commodification of female. Henchard commodifies his wife and daughter because of capitalistic ideology which itself is gender biased. Conditions of female characters are not better than the marketable commodity. They are controlled and deserted by the males who handle the property. Capitalistic mode of property distribution is inherited by patriarchal society and women are the victims of that mode. All the female characters are suffering from male domination caused by property handling. There are many more traces to prove the commodification of female though love can be seen from the surface level. To analyze the women’s situation in the patriarchal society where relationship between male and female is the relationship of domination and

subordination Marxist feminist tool has been applied as theoretical modality.

Furthermore, status and relationship between male and female and alienation of female has been analyzed which is the central issue of the research.

II. Feminism in Relation to Marxist Theory

Feminism is a school of thought which tries to dismantle the patriarchal social norms and values opposed to the law of equality to liberate women. It is as a movement declares that women are also human beings as equal to men. It is a voice against the inadequacy, the distortions as well as ideologies of the males. It is a massive complaint against patriarchal monopoly. It is a commitment to eradicate the ideology of domination to establish a healthy and equal society for both male and female. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical ground. It encompasses work done in a broad variety of disciplines, prominently including the approaches to women's roles and lives and feminist politics in anthropology and sociology, economics, women's and gender studies, feminist literary criticism, and philosophy especially Continental philosophy.

Feminism as a political theory sees women and their situation as central to political analysis. It asks why it is that in virtually all known societies men appear to have power over women, and how this can be changed. It is, therefore, engaged theory, which seeks to understand society in order to challenge and change it. Its goal is not abstract knowledge, but knowledge that can be used to guide and inform feminist political practice. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. While generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests, and issues. Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression.

Feminism may be defined as a movement seeking the reorganization of the world on the basis of gender equality in all human relations; a movement which

would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the ground of gender, would abolish all sex privileges and sex burden, and would strive to set up the recognition of the common humanity of women and men as the foundation of law and custom.

Feminism as a movement declares that women are also human beings equal to men and it is only when both stands their hands joined together, can lay the foundation of natural law. Feminism is a voice against the inadequacy, the distortion as well as the ideologies which males have created. Feminism as “the movement for women’s liberation is a part of the creation of a new society in which there are any forms of discrimination. This society cannot be separated from the process of its making” (Bryson 257). Feminism focuses on economic, political, psychological, social and physical equality and opposes gender roles, stereotypes and discrimination against women based on the assumption that women are passive, weak and physically helpless.

Feminism as a world- wide cultural movement clamored to secure a complete equality of women with men in the enjoyment of all human rights - moral, social, religious, political, educational, legal, economic and many others. It studies the dominations of women in many fields, from different perspectives. Therefore, Rosemarie Tong states, feminism:

Is not one, but many, theories or perspectives and that each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women’s oppression, to explain its causes and attempts to describe women’s oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to describe strategies for women’s liberation. The more skillful a feminist theory can combine description explanation, and perspective the better that theory is.” (1)

Feminism is not only a study of problems but also it seeks its solution and its impact as well. It is a theory based on reason. That is why, some critics call it 'feminist science'.

Feminism is an expression or resentment at the treatment imposed upon women. It voices the women's objection to be treated as a door-mat or a piece of furniture meant for the convenience of men. Women refuse to be shifted under oppression and restriction and intend to rebel against the hostile environment in which they live. It is a struggle against the hardship and neglect imposed upon women, "Patriarchy continually exerts forces that undermine women's self-confidence and assertiveness, then points to the absence of these qualities as proof that women are naturally and therefore correctly, self-effacing and submissive" (Tyson 85). Feminism struggles against this kind of false creation for the establishment of patriarchal regime. Thus, it is not against the males of society but against their monopoly and dictatorship. It raises question against the long standard dominant, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation on literature, social science, economics, politics, religion etc. There is a strong affiliation between Marxism and feminism. Both of them attack the social injustice and discrimination.

Feminism conjures up various images and ideas regarding the women's issues. In spite of diversity, feminism is often represented as a single entity and somehow concerned with gender and freedom. The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology defines "feminism as a doctrine suggesting that women are systematically disadvantaged in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for men and women". The main aim of the feminist movement was to develop women's personalities. Therefore, it studies women as people who were either oppressed or

suppressed. All women writers, who struggled against patriarchy to contain their womanhood, were generally called feminists.

From the very beginning of human civilization, women were considered as inferior, incidental being whereas men as the subject, superior and absolute ones. Patriarchal society has indeed been well served by the masculinist images. In patriarchy, all the images of women have been male created. Time and again, we come across the ambivalence men's feelings towards women. For the masculinists, women and sex are almost synonymous terms. Misogyny of distrust or women is an integral part of masculinism and patriarchy. Misogyny includes the beliefs that women are irrational, incompetent, gossipy, silly, overemotional, stupid, petty, dishonest, oversexed, and a host of other ugly things. Such stereotypes culminate in the attitude that women must be dominated, controlled, subdued as well as abused.

Though men and women are the product of the same society, man is called a cultural being and woman considered as a wild being. Men are always overpowered with the sense of "I as man; she is woman. I am strong; she is weak. I am tough; she is tender. I am self sufficient; she is needful" (Ruthven 54). Hence women's place in patriarchal circle is precious and unstable. Men thought that it was their right to rule over women. They established the unanimous rule in every aspect of humanity. Their supremacist ideologies taught and encourage women to believe that they were of less value; they were naturally inferior and unequal to men. They occupied a little or no space in social, cultural, economic, legal or political sphere. They remained usurped, dominated, invisible, insignificant and worthless beings to male supremacy. Most of the societies since the remote past have been built upon the patriarchal foundation and have invigorated and unduly authorized men folk to define the world and society.

They defined every aspect of society and culture from their perspective and depicted that in the works of art and literature.

Moreover, all feminist activities including feminist theory and literary criticism have its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. Thus, all feminist activity can be seen as a form of activism. This activism campaigns on issue such as reproductive right, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, discrimination and sexual violence. The themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, especially sexual objectification, oppression etc.

The basis of feminist ideology is that rights, privilege, status and obligations should not be determined by gender. Feminism, however, is a grass root movement which crosses the class and race boundaries. As culturally specific, it addresses the issues relevant to women of the corresponding society. It focuses on physical equality and opposes the gender roles, stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumption that women are passive, weak and physically helpless. It rejects the idea that certain characteristics or interests are inherently masculine, which are positive and superior and that certain characteristics or interests are inherently feminine, which are negative and inferior.

Women's first text with feminine spirit was Mary Willstoncraft's *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792). Since then, women writers have been exploring their experiences through books but they are frequently marginalized by the male literary canon. In this book she demanded equal education to women because mind does not know sex. It means women are capable of reasoning and should be educated accordingly. In her work *Letters on Education* published in 1790, Catherine Macaway, English historian, claimed that differences between sexes are product of

education and environment. She demanded equal education to the boys and girls for equal development of knowledge. She attacked the way in which women's minds and bodies had been distorted to please man.

William Thompson wrote a book *Appeal on Behold of Women* to attack J.S. Mills' concepts, "Women have no interest separate from those of their husband or father, they have no need of independent political representation" (Bryson 32). Bryson claimed that, "Their intellectual capacity is, he argues, at least as great as men; and biological difference can never be an argument against political rights" (32). Though Mills talked about human rights and humanism he tried to exclude women from politics but Thompson attracted his view and saw equal power of mind so physical differences should not be cause for the exclusion in politics. American feminist Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth century* (1845) was another important book for the women's social and political rights. It is believed that the emancipation of women and searching for their identity has started from the nineteenth century onwards. Then from the beginning of the twentieth century many feminist came and tried to dig out women's oppression from different perspectives. Before twentieth century, most of the feminist were liberal influenced by eighteenth century liberal humanism. But in the twentieth century radical feminist also came into the field. Many other feminists also came with different perspectives who are the feminist literary critics.

The feminist movement of literary criticism is concerned with the representation of women in literature and position of woman in society. The primary aim of the movement is to free women from oppressive restrains especially the cultural restraint of society which fixes the women's identity within narrow boundaries. The main strain of feminist movement strongly refuses the cultural

definition of women which attempts to fix women's identity within male dominated canon. Some feminists seek equal status as the male in society in every field. Women also should be given the position of human being equal to male. But there are some other feminists who take males as enemy of their rights, freedom etc. They want their own individual existence and identity not the identity and existence given by male members of society. Some feminists from English speaking countries try to reconstitute the ways of dealing with literature in order to do justice from female point of view, concerns and values. In this contexts Lois Tyson says, "Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature and other cultural productions reinforce or undermine the economic, political social and psychological oppression of women" (81).

Notwithstanding the contribution of revolutionary nineteenth and early twentieth century authors such as Mary Willstoncraft and her daughter Mary Shelly, George Eliot, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Virginia Woolf, feminist literary criticism developed mostly since the beginning of the late twentieth century women's movement. The movement included the writing of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millett, Michele Barrett, Betty Friden who examined a female 'Self' constructed in literature by male authors to embody various male fears and anxieties. They researched the social realities through the writings of male authors of contemporary era. Their main concern is on the contemporary social reality which deals with the female issues. Though these late twentieth century feminists are not standing on the base of earlier feminist directly; those earlier feminists' contribution helped them to specify their field. They paved way for modern feminist's research or study.

While conflict between traditional ideas about women's place and increasing involvement in female activities confused and frustrated a growing number of modern

women, Simon de Beauvoir published a book *The Second Sex* (1949) which played an important role in changing that outlook of women's thought and established clear idea of the fundamental questions of modern feminism in the fifties. For her, women are not born as women; women are women which is just a gender concept. Other is the place given to women. This book also deals with myths where women are shown as witch. She warns, "The myth must not be confused with recognition of signification" (997).

Despite various activities, no significant development in feminism is seen before the 1960s. During the late sixties the impact of feminism began to be felt in literary criticism. It moved forward progressively and reached its height during the sixties with American Showalterian concept of gynocriticism. Gynocriticism refers to a type of feminist criticism that focuses on literary works written by women, rather than critiquing male authorized works or studying women as readers. Women should develop their own text and their own criticism. That is a motto of gynocriticism. Before that Kate Millett and Michele Barrett developed an idea of sexual politics out of the idea of unequal relationship and subordination of women by patriarchal culture. But Barrett sees some fundamental common issues between male and female. In her much acclaimed work *Sexual Politics* (1977), Millett examines how "Power relations work and how man manipulate and perpetuate male domination over women" (Indreni 93). But Barrett views are inclined towards Marxism as I. P. Indreni writes, Barrett believes, "Change is required not only in culture but also in the position of economic production" (94).

Elaine Showalter's *Literature of Their Own* (1986) examines British women novelist since the Victorian period from the point of view of women's experience. Women writers did not get proper respect as males. Some of them change their

female name into male's name. Some did not publish their work due to lack of courage or competency to compete with males in the male dominated and patriarchal society. She divided the time into three phases: Feminine phase (1848-1880), Feminist phase (1880-1920) and Female phase (1920- present). These periods represent the imitation of male tradition, protest against male values and rejection of male values and self discovery respectively.

Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968) reveals the application of gender stereotypes to almost everything. She attacks what she calls the "phallic criticism". In this context I. P. Indreni writes, "She associates the maleness with a certain style of writing which is oriented towards a fixity of meaning and which is rigid, definite and closed. In her views, not all men write male ways, nor do all women writers adopt a female writing style" (96).

A Literature of Their Own inspires women to take strength in their act of independent in the world and constructs a reliable map of the achievements of English women writers. Showalter says that women write differently not because they are different psychologically from men but because their social experience is different. But in *Thinking About Women* Ellman finds males who write like female and some females who write like male. During the eighties, a major text on feminism appeared *The Mad-Woman in The Attic* (1979) by Gilbert and Gubar. This text is a reply to Harold Bloom's *Theory of Anxiety of Influence*. Gilbert and Gubar say that women do not fit into Bloom's patriarchal model. They have not any identity of authorship, because they do not have literary tradition unlike Bloom's attitude. They say anxiety is prior to influence. Women now are well aware of patriarchal norms and values as male domination over female. The concept of patriarchy has been revealed

as man made idea according to masculine purpose. They are capable of exposing the true identity of patriarchy realizing the significance of their own identity.

Most of French feminists are influenced by psychoanalysis especially from Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud. Before Lacan, feminism and psychoanalysis experienced a kind of hostility to each other. The French Feminists Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray challenge the inherent world view of patriarchal structure.

Julia Kristeva challenges the rigidity of the symbolic order. She brings Lacanian version of psychoanalysis and feminism together. She feels that female sexuality is open, subversive and characterized by certain fluidity against rigorous male determinism. She challenges the symbolic order of language and culture based upon the phallicentric idea of Lacan which is against the feminist ideology because it revolves around the Phallus and father.

In her essay *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976), Helen Cixous tries to establish female superiority over male. In this book she asks women writers to put their body into their writing. She tries to escape from the pleasure of male and wants to seek her own pleasure. Her view is that women must be free to feel herself as independent considering her rebellion against traditional values. Rosemary Tong says:

Applying Derrida's notion of difference of writing she constructed feminine writing (portraiture famine) with masculine writing (literature) understood psychoanalytically, masculine writing as rooted in a man's genital and liberal economy, which is emphasized by the phallus. (224)

Both Cixous and Irigaray agree feminine sexuality and the female body are sources of feminine writing. Irigaray tries to liberate women from the male philosophical thought but Cixous tries to liberate from male behavior. Irigaray

focuses on liberal economy. As Tong reveals, for her “patriarchy is [...] the manifestations of masculine liberal economy and will remain the order of the day until the repressed ‘feminine feminine’ is set free” (228).

Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist theory which focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women. Marxist feminism states that capitalism, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependency, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women, is the root of women's oppression. Marxism helps us to understand, “how economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and customs to keep women economically, politically, and socially oppressed as an underclass” (Tyson 93). Marxism, which is used to understand the feminist economical, political and social issues is called Marxist feminism. Thus, the primary task of Marxist feminism “is to create the kind of world in which women will experience themselves as whole persons, as integrated, rather than fragmented or splintered, beings” (Tong 45). Gender inequality is production of capitalism and determined by capitalistic mode of production. Capitalist social system is the main cause of women’s oppression in society and its way out is to dismantle this capitalistic social system.

According to Marxist theory, in capitalist societies the individual is shaped by class relations; that is, people's capacities, needs and interests are seen to be determined by the mode of production that characterizes the society they inhabit. Marxist feminists see gender inequality as determined ultimately by the capitalist mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression which is maintained (like racism) because it serves the interests of capital and the ruling class.

A central tenet of Marxist feminism is the belief that women's situation cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic context, and that any meaningful improvement in the lives of women requires that this context be changed. We live in a, as Philips says, "Class society that is also structured by gender, which means that men and women experience class in different ways" (qtd. in Bryson 258). For Marxist feminism, gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression. To analyze women's situation in society understanding its socio-economic context is the prime requisite. As the Marxists see the alienation of labour from work, self, human beings and nature women are also alienated from sex, self, children and from whole surroundings. In capitalism, labour is treated as a commodity which can be sold and bought.

Capitalism intensifies alienation and generalizes it throughout all levels of society. The end of alienation requires communism. So, in the society, the end of patriarchal domination requires communism. As the classless society emerges the class discrimination and gender discrimination will be diminished. Because when the classless society is established all people become equal and property will be in every body's hand equally. Then only in such society women get their proper place and equality. In this context K.K. Ruthven writes:

Marxism identifies capitalism (and the modes of production which support it) as a material base of a class system which is the source of all oppression, and holds that the specific subject of women will end necessarily in that general dismissal of oppression which is to follow the destruction of capitalism. (28)

In capitalistic system, relationship between employer and employee is similar to the commodity and its owner. Capitalists have everything but proletariats have

nothing except their labour. This is a wedge for their emancipation. When proletariats come to know that they are exploited, they are not getting proper wage they try to find out where and how they are exploited. Then they revolt against the exploitation imposed upon them. The class consciousness inspires them to revolt against every kind of injustice. They revolt freely because they have nothing to lose but bourgeoisie have everything to lose. Then they establish classless society which is a society of every people. In such society women also get equal chances. Then, hierarchyless society emerges. That is the result of class consciousness.

But capitalists, also represent patriarchy, exercise to create false consciousness to establish their empire. They try to hide all kinds of discriminations and injustice. Workers work very hard for the production of the factory and produce a large quantity but “none of them bore which name or any other mark of their individual contribution” (Tyson 58). So, the workers are alienated from the production itself. They are alienated from themselves also. When they are alienated from the product they find the work unpleasant but they are bound to do their work: “when the potential source of workers humanization becomes the actual source of his or her dehumanization, the worker is bound to undergo a major psychological crisis” (Tong 44). Therefore, workers are alienated from themselves. Workers are alienated from other human being as well, because they see around them their co-workers as competitor for job and promotion as the capitalistic system encourages. This sense of competition for job and promotion alienate workers from their co-workers. In this system finally workers are alienated from the nature itself “because the kind of work they do, it make them see nature as an obstacle to their survival” (Tong 44). So they are alienated from nature itself because of capitalistic economic system. Therefore,

the most important aspect for elimination of alienation is the eradication of capitalism which will help women also to emancipate from patriarchal domination.

For the elimination of the oppression of women capitalistic economy should be diminished which also dismantles the patriarchal social system because it is based on a capitalistic system. As workers are alienated from the product, self, other human being and nature women are also alienated from the product, self, other human being and nature women are also alienated from sex, self, children and their surroundings.

Women do not get their proper place because they are women:

Women are not paid less simply because they are unskilled, but because working class men have succeeded in protecting their own interest at women's expense they have been able to do this because dominant attitudes label any work done by women as inherently inferior to that done by men. (Bryson 241)

They are paid less because of the interest and self-protection of male superiority.

They evaluate women as if they were commodities because their sex differs from male sex. Women take domestic responsibilities and outward work is generally supposed to be done by males which is categorized as hard work. By this cause also females are treated as weak: "women's domestic responsibilities do mean that they are less able than men to defend their own economic interests" (Bryson 241). Therefore, women's interest, capacity, vigor etc. are neglected because, for males, women are commodities as the workers for capitalists.

Women are mostly confined in household activities and they are not allowed to go out to work because their strength, skill, ability are taken inferior to those of males which is not real but a general assumption. Women are doing household activities without any pay. Their work plays a vital role in outside work but they don't get any credit. In fact women enter the productive and important work before

than the males of society. They pave the way for outward activities and make base for industry. This is why Rosemarie Tong says:

No woman has to enter the productive work force, for all women are already in it, even if no one recognizes the fact. Women's work is the necessary conditions for all other labour from which, in turn surplus value is extracted. By providing current (and future) workers not only with food and clothes but also with emotional and domestic comfort, women keep the cogs of the capitalistic machine running. (54)

Therefore, some Marxist feminists ask for the wage for their household activities. They say that from the production of capitalistic factory or from surplus value some amount of money should be given to women. State should pay for housework of women. Tong brings this Marxist feminist concept from Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, who, "proposed that the state (the government and employers) not individual men (husbands, fathers and boyfriends), pay wage to housewives because capital ultimately profits from women's exploitation" (55).

Actually, women do not get such kind of wage nor their housework is taken as actual work. Therefore, women neither get any respect of their housework nor any wage. That is the cause of alienation of women's self. In capitalistic society, workers are like commodity and in patriarchal society women's place is also like marketable thing. Males use women as they want and get benefited according to their will. Actually, capitalists get benefit from the exploitation of women. But there are some Marxist feminists who reject the demand of wage for housework. Housework is related to feeling and emotion for them. In her book *The Economic Emergence of Women* Barbara Bergman advocates dislike for wage of the housework if woman demand wages for housework "the sexual division of labour would actually ossify"

(qtd. in Tong 56). On the other hand if it is not demanded males dominate female more.

Except housework, women have to perform their natural works. One of them is childbearing, women's unquestionable task or women's essential work. They give birth and bring up the baby but male members do not take it a vital work and if any woman does only child caring in the house she is called workless. But the father or may be so called father takes away the child when he wants. This injustice is in patriarchal society. As Engles says, "women give birth, the mother of any child is always known. However, the identity of the father is never certain because women could have been impregnated by a man other than her husband" (qtd. in Tong 49). Later this child, if male, tries to control mother.

Engles says, "To secure their wives marital fidelity, men supposedly seek to impose an institution of compulsory monogamy on women" (qtd. In Tong 49). If any women goes to other man, she is called prostitute and socially outcasted. She should be careful while meeting other males. But in man's case it is different. Patriarchal society does not seek such strict marital fidelity from males simply because in family male's condition is similar to the condition of capitalists in society. As workers are commodities in capitalistic social system, women are commodities in family because of influence of capitalistic social system. Engles says, "if wives are to be emancipated from their husband, women must first become economically independent of men" (qtd. in Tong 49). For that dismantle of capitalistic economic system is needed where exploitation of labour is working very strongly. By this reason women are suffering from the adjective like weak, passive, emotional in patriarchal society.

Women are treated as commodity in capitalistic society. They see freedom but cannot experience it. In family their voices do not get any place where her husbands,

boyfriends, fathers, male members are dictators. Their relatives, supposed nearest persons try to impose their desire upon women. Therefore, they feel alienated from nature and surroundings. Working-class women are treated badly by the higher class women and working class men also try to manipulate working class women according to their will, but bourgeoisie women suffer only from the male members of their own class. Similar is the condition of black women. First of all, they have to suffer from racial discrimination and then patriarchal discrimination.

Marxist feminism finds similarities between male and female in the family and bourgeoisie and proletariat in society. Husband, father or male member in a family is like bourgeoisie in the society and wife in a family is like a proletariat in society. It does not mean that women are suffering only within family but family itself is initiating point for women domination. Women are being exploited in the society on the basis of patriarchal norms and values which are construction of economic power position. Women are the victims of men's control "Man's control of women will cease only with the dissolution of the institution of private property" (Tong 49). Women are unable to practice their freedom and desire. Their needs and feelings are condemned to be suppressed because property is in the hand of patriarchy which believes that there is no desire of women different from men's. Therefore, women are being exploited sexually, psychologically, physically etc. The root cause is such the oppression of economic system of the society.

Before marriage and after marriage women become the victim of sexual exploitation. Marxist feminist Catharine compares sex to work, capitalist to man, worker to women, commodity to sex\women, capitalist accumulation to male sexual desire etc. There is no place for women's sexual desire to society. If a husband or boyfriend wants to have sexual relation then that is desire of wife\girlfriend also.

Tong brings the concept of Marx and Engels and states, “Marriage is a form of prostitution, Marx and Engel implicitly accepted that the services that can be prostituted are not limited to sexual service. Child care, and emotional support are also services sold by the prostitution –wife” (64). Therefore, in patriarchal society husband wife relation is like “pimp-prostitute” relation, which is similar to the bourgeoisie- proletariat or employer employee relationship.

The economic situation of females explains why they, like labors, sell themselves to others. Selling oneself alienates one from one’s work because the work is being done for another, not for the self. So under capitalism female becomes a commodity. Selling and buying becomes the surviving method of their lives. To end this treatment, women as commodity, first of all women should get economic independency. If the economic basis is changed the women will get full freedom which will be an end of patriarchy also: “Patriarchy cannot be ended without fundamental economic change” (Bryson 258). Until and unless women get living wages this dependency and exploitation remain as a social norm and rooted practice. As Jaggar opines, “When women workers achieve a living wage, they are also working a concession from capitalism, they are also women winning economic independency from man” (qtd. in Bryson 259).

Because of the unequal power relationship, females are compelled to do what males want them to do. Men use women whenever and wherever they want. Women are just like the commodity for men, in patriarchal society because men can buy women easily, as a capitalist can buy work.

III. Women as Commodities: Patriarchy and Capitalism

Marxism offers both a way of finding historical evidence of women's oppression and can describe how writers consciously or unconsciously transpose that evidence into their texts. The repression or misrepresentation of women can be methodically exposed and analyzed when we believe, as Marxism does, that discourse is a form of power. Hardy wanted to make use of this power by presenting us with a female character, such as Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, and Lucetta.

The Mayor of Casterbridge begins with a scene that dramatizes the analysis of female subjugation as a function of capitalism: the auction of Michael Henchard's wife Susan at the fair at Weydon-Priors. Henchard's auctioning off his wife to the highest bidder at Weydon Fair in the first chapter verifies that in early nineteenth-century England women of her class in rural districts were regarded as little more than stock to be disposed of at their owners' whims "it has been done elsewhere" (11) affirms that such sales were not uncommon. After awaking from his drunken sleep and realizing that Susan has indeed left with the sailor Henchard rationalizes that Susan's meekness and ignorance—her idiotic simplicity has led her to acquiesce in the transaction, and does not look further than the spiked firmity for what drove him to sell her. His introspective inflexibility makes it impossible for Henchard to see beyond his wife's gullibility and his own alcohol abuse to the real cause of the sale, his stubborn pride. He thinks his having sold her is a delusion-until he finds her wedding ring on the grassy floor and the five shillings and the bank-notes in his breast-pocket.

Eighteen years later, when Susan returns to Henchard destitute after Richard Newson being reported lost at sea off the coast of Newfoundland, Henchard attempts to make amends. Although he may have been signaling his desire to be forgiven, he

encloses with a note to his former wife five pound notes and five shillings, in total the same amount for which he had sold her. "He sat down at the table and wrote a few lines; next taking from his pocket-book a five-pound note, which he put in the envelope with the letter, adding to it, as by an after-thought, five shillings"(71).

Although conducted in his library rather than in his business office, this act looks suspiciously like another cash transaction on the part of a merchant who makes his living by buying and selling commodities, and knows to a penny what it will take to make a purchase. Henchard's gesture of enclosing the bank-notes and coins may tacitly have said to her [Susan] that he bought her back again.

The remarriage of Michael and Susan Henchard is the product of business-like determination and strict mechanical rightness in Henchard's conscientious thinking. Henchard courts Susan as if he were going to work or performing a civic duty. The visit was repeated again and again with business-like determination by the mayor. Outside the church on their wedding day the common people's reaction to the event is negative; the average Casterbridger feels that the Mayor is degrading himself. In the eyes of the townsfolk he is lowering his dignity by marrying so comparatively humble a woman. To extrapolate from this statement, women were (and still are) regarded as status symbols, just as the right make of car is today. For many people even today, female currency remains beauty; in these terms, Susan is regarded as "bankrupt." People in Casterbridge are mystified at Henchard's choice, for Susan has neither the social status, nor physical attractiveness, nor money necessary for one who wishes to marry a merchant-prince.

There are striking parallels between Susan and the second woman from Henchard's past, Lucetta. She tries to break from the bonds of her past, and this destroys her. What destroy Lucetta are the attitudes of society. For much of the

duration of Lucetta's existence in the novel she is the subject of ridicule. When word is circulated throughout her native Jersey about her intimacy with Henchard, it is she and not Henchard who suffers opprobrium. This intimacy, when revealed in Casterbridge, leads to her social downfall, a miscarriage, and subsequently her death.

Elizabeth-Jane, on the other hand, is not subjected to the public ridicule and mistreatment to the same extent as Lucetta. Henchard appears to be the main instigator of her worries. From the beginning of Henchard's remarriage, Henchard takes it upon himself to see that Elizabeth-Jane conforms to the manners, fashion, attitudes, and general lifestyle expected of the Mayor's daughter. First, he assumes that Elizabeth will take his name without objecting: "You shall take it as if by choice" (141).

Present-day society's conditions and attitudes have been compared to the treatment of Susan, Lucetta, and Elizabeth-Jane. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Thomas Hardy attempted to make Victorian society more aware of its treatment of and attitudes towards women. This object he effected through the chief female characters of the novel, as well as through such minor figures as Mrs. Goodenough (the furnity vendor), Nance Mockridge, Mother Cuxsom, and Mrs. Stannidge, the genial publican of the Three Mariners Inn. Whether of high or low estate, women are consistently revealed either as insignificant workers or as pawns in male power-games.

The Mayor of Casterbridge has perhaps a more dramatic beginning than any of Hardy's novels. In a manner, the crisis is reached in the opening chapter itself. The rest of the painful story boomerangs into tragedy as a result of the initial error i.e. wife selling business. In the feudal-bourgeois society, the reduction of man to a commodity is the ultimate form of indignity - a thing cheerfully indulged in and

almost indifferently accepted. A woman's displacement is, then, double. She's violated as a human being, and she's violated as a sexual species. A society built on the cash nexus cannot but turn human beings into objects and things. Susan's meek acceptance of her fate and the lingering traces of legality with which her poor mind wrestles only serve to highlight the tragedy of bourgeois marriage. She has simply been bartered away. It is the only way that females can respond to a social situation where money, sex and power had begun to undermine the quality of life.

Male characters of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* treat female characters as a commodity. They have control over the women. Women are possessed by them just like a property. Treating women like a property is the attitude of the males deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and values. On the other hand, female characters of the novel are in dilapidated condition without self respect. They are living in a pathetic condition.

“Mike,’ she said, ‘I’ve lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I’m no more to ‘ee; I’ll try my luck elsewhere. ‘Twill be better for me and Elizabeth-Jane, both. So good-bye!’

Seizing the sailor's arm with her right hand, and mounting the little girl on her left, she went out of the tent sobbing bitterly”. (11)

Her pathetic condition reminds her no more than a commodity. This shows females as the real victims of patriarchal norms, values and attitudes. They are like puppet in the hands of male members of the society. Females have to do what males want because they are highly depending on them for their survival. They are compelled to sell themselves just like a commodity. A description of the horse auction outside the tent immediately before the auction of Susan parodies the event.

There is a similarity between horse and women. They both are commodities for the owner and their owner can sell them to anyone. Henchard, as a male thinks that female doesn't have an existence of their own. This represents the concept of all male member of the society. Women became victim and do not dare to revolt because of dependency upon males for their survival.

A woman is viewed, and judged in terms of masculine value system. She is identified in relation to man. It is the men who defined her according to their needs and beneficiaries. She has no right to make decision about herself. She is trained to internalize the masculine truth as an absolute and transcendental reality and an inalienable aspect of her life. She gives up criticizing, judging, investigating for herself, and surrenders to male superiority. Men have controlled the conceptual arena and determined social values and structures of institutions. It is the male who has power of naming, defining and exploring. He is authorized to analyze, describe and direct female. She herself perceives the world from masculine perspectives. A woman is compelled to perceive another female from prevailing masculine modality since she is forced to accept male dominated social values in which male has the privileged position. Women have always served others and have been told that the glory and fulfillment is to be found in the denial of them in their service.

Hardy's hero Henchard is self centered. He does not have concern with his wife and daughter but he seems to be more concerned with his reputation. "Did I tell my name to anybody last night, or didn't I tell my name?" he said to himself; and at last concluded that he did not" (15). This monologue emphasizes Henchard's self seeking nature after the auction of Susan's simplistic belief as well as her body. The women was deceived and deserted by her husband. He used her and left. "He knew that she must have been somewhat excited to do this; moreover, she must have

believed that there was some sort of binding force in the transaction” (15-16). The root cause of women’s oppression in the society is economic inequality. As economic forces have been manipulated by patriarchal law and customs, women are economically, politically and socially taken as an underclass. Time and again male members of the patriarchal society take women as objects and use them when they want and leave them when they are fed up and that makes women frustrated from their life.

Some eighteen years later after the auction Susan with her daughter return to Casterbridge making inquires about Henchard. She knows that Henchard has become the mayor of the town. One morning Elizabeth Jane is sent with a note from her mother to Henchard. Elizabeth Jane enters the office. Henchard gives a warm welcome to Elizabeth Jane, reads the note from her mother, and writes one to be returned. He also gives her five guineas. He sends five guineas to Susan as a secret message of remorse, believing that giving her the same amount he sold her will make matters right. Henchard decided to meet Susan at the Ring on the Budmouth road. The detailed description of the Roman amphitheatre sets a background of cruelty for the meeting between Susan and Henchard. It is the place “that in 1705 a women who had murdered her husband was half-strangled and then burnt there in the presence of ten thousand spectators”(101) at where they meet. Henchard had chosen this spot as being the safest from observation.

Henchard is not responsible towards his family. For him neither his daughter nor wife nor their problem is important. His showy nature is revealed when he decides it is better to pay court to Susan so as to keep their “child respect” (82). Susan also declares her intention to renew the relationship because she is concerned for the welfare of her daughter. She wants a better life for Elizabeth- Jane to improve her

status from “the straight waistcoat of poverty” (26). In a male dominated society she doesn't have another option beside this. So she surrenders herself to the Henchard. “I am quite in your hands, Michael,” she said meekly. I came here for the sake of Elizabeth; for myself, if you tell me to leave again tomorrow morning, and never come near you more, I am content to go” (78). She is prepared for herself to go away without any further trouble to Henchard. Though the relationship was renewed it is clear that there is not any love left between them. Susan had used her marriage as a means of survival for self and her daughter. At home Henchard demonstrates polite attention but there little evidence of real love and both Susan and Elizabeth Jane are the obvious victims of the practical joke.

Henchard had used marriage as a means to take power over Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta. Once he gets the power he is free to dominate them. At first he impose a name on them “Now Susan, I want to have her called Miss Henchard- not Miss Newson. Lots o' people do it already in carelessness- it is her legal name- so it may as well as be made her usual name- I don't like t'other name at all for my own flesh and blood” (93) and then take possession over their lives. Henchard also compels Elizabeth Jane to take his name. Though Elizabeth Jane was comfortable with her identity Henchard forces her to take his name “You will take my surname now –hey? It will be much more pleasant to me. “Tis legally yours, you know” (129) as it is a legal. What is legal in the society is determined by the males. The society is dominated by the males and women are the victims. Henchard uses marriage as a means to control over Lucetta “whom he had hitherto been dreaming of as almost his property” (183). Like Susan and Elizabeth Jane he wants to take possession over Lucetta by “giving her name in return for her devotion” (183).

Both Henchard and Farfrae want to marry Lucetta because marriage is just like a business for them and Lucetta is just like a commodity. As both want to marry her, a kind of antagonism arises between them “the sense of occult rivalry in suitorship was so much superadded to the palpable rivalry of their business lives. To the coarse materiality of that rivalry it added an inflaming soul” (191). The friends turn in enemy because both want to take possession over Lucetta, the commodity. Henchard publicly declares his determination to destroy Farfrae. The Psalm which he forces the singers to sing at The Three Marines inn clearly shows the intensity of Henchard’s hatred for the Farfrae. That Psalm opens thus:

“His seed shall orphans be, his wife
A widow plunged in grief;
His vagrant children beg their bread
Where none can give relief.”(207)

It is really a terrible thing which he desires for Farfare. As he tells Elizabeth Jane, he may even go to the length of killing that man. This is what he says to her: “He (Farfrae) has taken away everything from me, and by heavens, if I meet him I won’t answer for my deeds” (245). Henchard sees every relationship as materialistic and he is capable of any inhuman cruelty. Later when Farfrae and Lucetta were married Henchard tells to Lucetta “he had married money, but nothing more” (263). He then, “wash his hands of the game” (263) though he himself was concerned with the money of Lucetta. For him marriage is just like a business.

Comparison of Susan with four pence at her death reminds us that she is no more than the commodity.

“Why should death rob life o’fourpence? I say there was no reason in it.

Well, poor soul; she’s helpless to hinder that or anything now. All her shining

keys will be took from her, and her cupboards opened; and little things a' didn't wish seem, anybody will see; and her wishes and ways will be as nothing!"(126).

Likewise Susan's request that four pennies be used to weigh down her eyes after her death reminds us she has lived her life as a material things. As a material thing she doesn't have her own will and wishes.

Females in the novel were depicted as a weak person without any guts and without any spirit of enterprise or resistance to events and persons. They were presented as sickly, pale and frail creatures completely devoid of intellect and accomplishments. In the opening chapter Susan allows her husband to sell her as if she were a commodity. When Hardy introduces female characters, he describes them as passive, inferior and as a weak creature. Description of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane shows that they are passive and weak. "She was dressed in the mourning clothes of a widow. Her companion, also in black, appeared as a well-formed young woman about eighteen, completely possessed of that ephemeral precious essence of youth , which is itself beauty, irrespective of complexion or contour"(19).

Likewise males in the novel are depicted as powerful person with guts and with the spirit of enterprise or resistance to events and persons. They were presented as active, superior and powerful beings. The description of Henchard is done with a superior quality "facing the window, in the chair of dignity, sat a man about forty years of age; of heavy frame, large features, and commanding voice; his general build being rather coarse than compact. He had a rich complexion, which verged on swarthinness, a flashing black eye, and dark, bushy brows and hair" (33).

As Susan lies dying Lucetta re-enters Henchard's life. It could be said that Lucetta returns from the regretted part just as Susan and Elizabeth Jane. Lucetta

suggests marriage to Henchard. There is a parallel between Susan and Lucetta in their use of Elizabeth-Jane. Susan, by writing to Henchard and sending the note with Elizabeth-Jane, hoped to secure a living for them both. Lucetta, by employing Elizabeth-Jane, hoped to attract Henchard to visit her home. Again the object of exercise was marriage. Henchard, single-minded in his pursuit of Lucetta, regards her “as almost his property” (183), a phrase intended to remind us of the auction.

Henchard’s relationship with Lucetta somehow parallels his relation with Susan he tries to make money by using both relationships. As he is grown up in the male dominated patriarchal society which is a form of capitalistic society, he doesn’t understand any kind of feeling of females.

Henchard’s relationship with other characters is materialistic. For him, every relationship is materialistic relationship. He wants Elizabeth-Jane to behave like an upper class sophisticated people. Elizabeth Jane is given ornaments and many other materials things. Though the females are not the lover of ornaments and jewelers by the birth, males give them ornaments to impose their will on them. Elizabeth-Jane continues to try and improve herself, but Henchard always finds faults with her and is either merely bad tempered or aggressive. Even the greeting by the Elizabeth-Jane to parlour maid is intolerable to Henchard. Henchard tells Elizabeth Jane not to thank her “why dostn’t leave off thanking that girl as if she were a goddess-born! Don’t I pay her a dozen pound a year to do things for ’ee” (137), as she doesn’t deserve that. Henchard always dominate lower class poor people. “Why do you lower yourself so confoundedly? Haven’t I told you o’t fifty times? Hey? Making yourself a drudge for a common workwoman of such a character as hers! Why, ye’ll disgrace me to the dust!”(137). For him lower class people and especially females were just like a dust.

Henchard as the member of the patriarchal society doubts about the freedom of female. He is furious and forbids Elizabeth Jane to see Farfrae.

“Have you made him any foolish promise?

Gone the least bit beyond sniff and snaff at all?’

‘No. I have promised him nothing.’

Good. All’s well that ends well. I particularly wish you not to see him again.’

‘Very well sir.’

‘you promise?’

She hesitated for the moment, and then said-

‘Yes, if you much wish it.’

I do. He is an enemy to our house!”(118).

The society Hardy presents in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a class society that is structured by gender which means men and women experience class in a different way. Henchard is not concerned with the happiness of the daughter. He thinks himself as superior and dominates others as an inferior. On the other hand Elizabeth-Jane is compelled to sacrifice his true love. She sacrifices her desire and feelings. For her, her own desires, feelings and emotions are of secondary importance. She spends many lonely hours pretending that all is well. In the patriarchy society females usually lost the things that they love.

Elizabeth-Jane is made miserable by Henchard’s treatment of her, especially when he find out that she has worked in The Three Mariners. As Henchard is concerned about his own social status he sees that she has reduced her social status. Elizabeth-Jane’s natural sense of humility angers Henchard even more. She is living fearful life “tried to stand up and confront him trustfully; but she could not; she was troubled at his presence, like the Brethren at the avowal of Joseph” (128), with a deep

sorrow in the heart. Henchard attitude towards the female sex also distinguishes him as he regards women as a weak creature. For this reason he has rather an attitude of contempt towards them. His attitude towards women is one of indifference. He cannot appreciate the feminine graces. He keeps aloof from women and may even be called a women-hater.

Henchard relationship with Lucetta somewhat parallels his relationship with Susan. He tries to make money using both these relationships. Lucetta pleading to Henchard for her freedom “why not leave me the freedom that I gained with such sorrow” (205) shows female dependency on the male. Their existence depends upon the mercy of the male. Similarly, Lucetta fears that her past will be revealed. She entreats Farfrae not to listen to gossip about her, “If they tell you, I am a coquette, which some may, because of the incidents of my life, don’t believe it, for I am not” (170). Her existence is threatened by the domination of males.

Henchard threatens Lucetta saying that he would reveal their secrecy and even force her to marry using Elizabeth Jane as a witness. “you cannot in honour refuse me,” he said. ‘And unless you give me your promise this very night to be my wife, before a witness, I’ll reveal our intimacy – in common fairness to other men!’”(206). Even Elizabeth Jane is bewildered by her fathers’ apparent power over Lucetta. Later when Henchard knew that he cannot get Lucetta because she has already married to Farfrae; he tried to blackmail her to get money. “I must tell you a secret to ask it. You may have heard that I have been unlucky this year? I did what I have done before – speculated rashly; and I lost. That’s just put me in a strait” (219). He demands money from her. As Henchard have a love-letters of Lucetta he demands money as blackmail. Henchard even gives threats of revealing to Farfrae his past love-affair with Lucetta. The love-letters that she had originally written to Henchard now prove

her undoing. The skimmity-ride makes her panicky because of the fear of exposure of her past love-affair with Henchard. The social conviction which demands that a woman should have had no love-affair with anybody before her marriage makes Lucetta terribly afraid of the consequences of this exposure. In this way, the existence of female is dominated by male in one way or another. Later Lucetta died because of the same oppression. "He will see it, won't he? Donald will see it! He is just coming home – and it will break his heart – he will never love me any more – and O, it will kill me – kill me!"(291). Elizabeth Jane statement "poor - women – I fear that they have killed her!"(299) clamor that Lucetta died because of patriarchal norms and values where women were just like a commodity.

After the death of Lucetta; Farfrae marry Elizabeth Jane. Farfrae was rich and easily marry Elizabeth Jane. Patriarchy wants monogamy relation of women and tries to confine women within the marital sexual relation but they don't think about their own polygamy and extra – martial relations bad. It means that they want women to be in their own possession like objects. The caged bird given by Henchard to the Elizabeth Jane in her wedding ceremony is the symbol of her. She is like a caged bird without any freedom in the male dominated society. The novel closes upon her insecure and unpredictable future.

In nutshell, the relationship between male and female is relationship of master and slave, relationship of exploiter and exploited, relationship of capitalist and labour. Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta represent the perfect woman of the time and the perfect woman of our times respectively.

Hardy's women characters do not have self respect and male characters do not accept the co-existence of women. Women are being alienated from their women selves and they do not have self respect. They are being treated as if they were

commodity. They are compelled to do what male wants against their own will. Since what they are doing is not for the self but rather for other they are alienated from self. Patriarchal norms and values try to confine women within the boundary which takes women as things, used for the convenience of males. Women are being dominated as males have grip over the economy power and the property is inherited by them in the society.

Alienation means a feeling of separateness, of being alone and apart from others. It normally refers to powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, and self-estrangement. It is the sense of an individual who feels out of touch with himself\ herself. Alienation is rooted in the nature of female existence in the world. There is an inherent dissociation between female as subject and female as object. Female as a creative subject seeks to be and t realize herself and female as an object is manipulated by others. The concept of alienation is based on distinction between existence and essence. Female existence is alienated from her essence. As they are alienated from self “history is not gay or attractive” (142) for them .Their history is the history of pain, agony, powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, self-estrangement. Historically their relationship with male is just like master and slave relationship where “blood builds and wealth enjoys” (146).

All the female characters in the novel are alienated from self. They are isolated, fragmented, mystified, poor, physically exhausted and mentally debased. The painful description of Elizabeth Jane “she lived on, a dump, deep-feeling, great eyed creature, construed by not a single contiguous being; quenching with patient fortitude her incipient interest in life”(139) shows her alienation. Susan’s alienation can be seen in her auction. She is like a commodity. Anyone can sell her and anyone

can buy her. She doesn't have her will. "anybody will see; and her wishes and ways will be as nothing!"(126). Norms and values of patriarchal society and her simplicity "had allowed her to live on in the conviction that Newson had acquired a morally real and justifiable right to her by his purchase" (24). She has reduced in the form of commodity which is the main cause of her alienation.

Likewise, Lucetta is living a fragmented self. To her she said "if ever tears and pleading have served the weak to fight the strong, let them do so now!"(261). She thinks herself as a weak. Though she is rich she cannot enjoy richness. She is socially isolated. Henchard as being the male member of the society need not to fear about his earlier relationship with Lucetta but she have to because she is a female. Female are not equally free as male in the patriarchal society. The attitude of society towards male and female is different. Lucetta is living a life in a mentally debased situation.

"... in a semi-paralysed state. For very fear she could not undress, but sat on the edge of the bed, waiting. Would Henchard let out the secret in his parting words? Her suspense was terrible. Had she confessed all to Donald in their early acquaintance he might possibly have got over it, and married her just the same – unlikely as it had once seemed; but for her or any one else to tell now would be fatal"(260).

Women are alienated from their own self in the novel. Susan, Elizabeth Jane and Lucetta are living their life with hesitation and fear. They can see the power and freedom of males but they themselves are trapped within the patriarchal boundary where they are killing their own desire and living for the desire of others. Therefore, their self is not their own real self. They are alienated from their own real self. Their originality – thinking and feeling – does not make any sense in their real life. So,

women's real self is dying and artificial and dictated self is acting well. They are alienated from their real self.

IV. Conclusion

This study finds out the cause behind desertion of women characters in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. To identify cause of this desertion this study is centered on the character study of the characters and their behaviour towards each other as well. The male female relationships and their attitudes towards each other are the central issue of this novel. The research examining the different events and conversations between characters, proves that male's attitude towards female is not better than the attitude and behaviour towards an object. Women are treated as workers of the capitalists where workers know their exploitation but are compelled to work. Hardy uses a mixture of voices: the narrator and often the bystander giving us a view of the scene and opinion as well. The male characters Henchard and Farfrae, both victim of patriarchal attitude towards women are opportunists. For them every relation is materialistic. On the other hand, female characters like Susan, Elizabeth, Lucetta and minor figures as Mrs. Goodenough, Nance Mockridge, Mother Cuxos, and Mrs. Stannidge whether of high or low estate they are consistently revealed as insignificant workers or as pawn in male power games. A society built on cash nexus treats human beings as an object. It is the society where money, sex and power had undermines the quality of life.

The society Hardy presents in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a class society that is structured by gender which means men and women experience class in a different way. Male characters like Henchard and Farfare use marriage as a means to take power over female. Marriage is just like a business and they are only concerned with profit. After getting power, males are free to dominate females and they take possession over them. The property handling and its distribution system is the cause of women's domination. As a woman doesn't have economic independence they are

compelled to do what men want. Women are possessed by them just like a property. They don't have a freedom and they are alienated from the selves. They are isolated, fragmented, mystified, poor, physically exhausted and mentally debased. Alienation is rooted in the nature of female existence in the world. Susan's alienation can be seen in her auction. She is like a commodity. Norms and values of patriarchal society and her simplicity had allowed her to live on in a conviction that Newson had acquired a morally real and justifiable right to her by his purchase. She had reduced in the form of commodity. Likewise, what destroys Lucetta are the attitudes of society. When word is circulated throughout her native Jersey about her intimacy with Henchard, it is she and not Henchard who suffers opprobrium. This intimacy, when revealed in Casterbridge, leads to her social downfall, a miscarriage, and subsequently her death.

The present research entitled "Commodification of the Female in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*" proves that commodification of the women in this text is caused by the patriarchal concept about women as an object or as a commodity. This concept is caused and enforced by the economic condition of women.

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