

RESEARCH ARTICLE



LITERARY EVALUATION ON THOMAS HARDY'S JUDE THE OBSCURE

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ABSTRACT

Thomas Hardy is a tragic novelist of eminence. Jude the Obscure is his last novel and in it Hardy has explored all that he has to say in the novel form. It is the story of human sufferings and feelings during hard time. Hardy was so distressed by the readers of his generation on his presentation of unconventional treatment of Victorian marriage law and academic snobbery. He gave up novel - writing after Jude and concentrated solely on poetry. The present article attempts to evaluate literally on the different aspects of Jude the Obscure.

It studies primarily on the tragedy of Jude's unfulfilled ambitions. In the course of the novel, there is a force of education and self-advancement on one side, and of love and marriage on the other side mysteriously combine to destroy the life of Jude. It is observed that the question of marriage is more central to the novel than the theme of Jude's scholastic ambition. The social ostracism in Jude and Sue is more tormenting than anything else. In addition, the roles of Phillotson, Father Time, Sue and Arabella in the tragedy of Jude are closely studied. The tragic predicament in Tess, Henchard and Jude are studied as pictures of both comparison and contrast. Besides, it studies Jude as, 'the poor puppet' – a plaything in the hands of fate and the people around him. The other 'problems' raised in the novel are the subject of close scrutiny.

KEY WORDS

Unfulfilled ambition, Love and marriage, Social ostracism, Self-advancement, Poor puppet, tragic predicament.

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INTRODUCTION

Popularity of Jude the Obscure

Among the last novels of Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (1895) is considered to be the best which appeared since Tess of the D'urbervilles (1891). The novel is set out against the Victorian society, a fierce transitional period involving industrialization,

economic shifts, and the reconstruction of social relations. It is derived from Hardy's refusal to bow to the demands of the Victorian reader. Hardy probably felt that he had said all that he had to say in the novel form, and after Jude he gave up novel writing.

1.2 Jude is 'the obscure'

If the protagonist of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) is 'a man of character', Jude is 'the obscure' one, even according to the title. Irving Howe has labelled Jude as Hardy's most distinctly modern work. Even at first reading, the novel strikes the reader as an uncompromisingly stark and gloomy, not permitting even a faint ray of light. Every prospect of hope is immediately stalled by some adverse turn. John Butler points out, 'Jude the Obscure is the first modern novel. Balanced as it is between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, it is inevitable that it should select elements from the old world that point towards the new'. According to D.F. Hannigan, 'Jude the Obscure is not only his greatest work; but no other living novelist could have written it'.

1.3 Critical appreciation of 'Jude the Obscure'

In *Jude the Obscure*, there is a grandeur of conception, a completeness of commitment, which has all been transmuted into art, and yet the reader feels to discover a good deal of the author's personal ideas: his own doubts, hopes and fears. It is the only work of Hardy which can be aptly defined as 'a novel of ideas', with a good deal of discussion and argument, often progressing at cross-purposes. The book shows 'the novelist as sage'. Also it makes the reader think of 'the novel as process', a description that implies a multiplicity of techniques which go along with many-sided points. In Hardy's own words in the preface to the novel – it conveys 'a series of seemings, or personal impressions', rather than convictions.

2-SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE, JUDE THE OBSCURE**2.1 Hardy's use of 'Obscure'**

The reader experiences difficulty in finding out what the novel is precisely about. The title 'obscure', in a sense, suggests something that is ambiguous and difficult to understand. Ian Gregor says that it tells so many things – 'a malevolent universe, an outworn system of education, the rigidity of the marriage laws', or as one of the recent critics has put it, 'the sheer difficulty of human beings living elbow to elbow and heart to heart; the difficulty of being unable to bear prolonged isolation or prolonged closeness'.

Further the word, 'obscure' is obviously a reference to Jude's poor and miserable background. An

orphan, his parentage is almost unknown, his mother and father having quarrelled or separated. Besides, Jude is lonely throughout the novel, almost unsocial, and is little known to anybody. He is an obscure personality who rarely communicates with anybody. Consequently, his character and outlook is full of contradictions. As Irving Howe puts it, 'He accomplishes nothing to his heart's content – his desires are only partially fulfilled. Jude is a study of failure rather than success.'

2.2 Jude is Hardy's poor puppet

The reader wonders what is Hardy meant when he referred to Jude as 'my poor puppet'. The 'my' is obviously an epithet of endearment and the word, 'poor' is suggestive of Hardy's sympathy for him. Hardy's characters are generally helpless puppets in the hands of destiny. Here, in particular, Jude is a plaything not only of his ironical destiny but also by people around him like Sue, Phillotson, Arabella and even the physician Vilbert. Like a puppet, he acts when impelled or driven by the people in his life.

3-PLOT CONSTRUCTION OF JUDE**3.1 Jude: Similarities with Tess and The Mayor**

The plots of *Tess* and *Jude* are apparently similar, with one novel depicting a woman destroyed between two men and the pattern reversed with *Jude* destroyed between two women. The conflict between 'flesh and spirit' is common to the two novels. The pattern of appearance and disappearance of characters like Alec in *Tess* and Arabella in *Jude* is recurrent. But the comparison cannot go beyond this. The purity and innocence of *Tess* has no resemblance to *Jude* who is simple and trusting. In both novels, the novelist discusses heredity determining their natures. Hardy's admiration and sympathy for *Tess* is unlike his 'pity' for this 'poor puppet' whose negative qualities drive him to desperation and ruin. In both these novels one wonders whether Hardy could say all that he desired to express. About *Jude*, Hardy himself felt that the book fell short of his expectations. Hardy also referred to the rectangular pattern of the plot. As in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, there are reversals, comings and goings of characters who appear and disappear. Events and even human nature are unpredictable, fate seems to govern character.

Jude the Obscure is a different kind of book from *Tess of the D'urbervilles*. In *Tess*, the entire interest

of the novel is attached to the life of a woman. In Jude, just as in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, it gathers round the career of a man. The history of Jude's ineffectual efforts to obtain a university education is intensely pathetic. Indeed, the first part of *Jude the Obscure* would be held up by the critics as one of the most touching records in all literature. The character of Sue is fascinating as that of Elfrida in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873).

3.2 Movement and exodus

Movement and exodus becomes the basic pattern of the plot. In every section Jude moves from one place to another, always searching for something he wants. Every chapter title is the name of a new place – Marygreen, Aldbrickham, Christminster, Melchester, and like a 'grand chain' pattern, he returns to Marygreen where the tragic plot has its end. Such a reckless movement is suggestive of the insecurity of self-exile; it is the 'ache of modernism'. The most illogical part of the novel is Jude's return to Arabella after the poignant situation of Sue's return to Phillotson. This is as mysterious as Tess's stay with Alec in Sandbourne. These are gaps which Hardy leaves to the readers to guess. In Jude's case, his stay with Arabella is very brief, with the interludes of his last meeting with Sue, and his chronic ill-health, ending with his premature death.

3.2 Repeated events and the influence of Christianity

It is an important aspect of the plot of *Jude* is, it begins with the boyhood of Jude and continues on the most significant events of his adult life. Hardy selects the incidents which form a pattern; instances of Jude's tender-heartedness, his vulnerability to women, and his readiness to pursue ideals. Therefore the plot of *Jude* is made up of repeated events: Jude and his son and both abandoned by a heartless parent, Jude like his mother attempts suicide by drowning. Arabella twice forces Jude to marry her, Sue and Jude go to one another in their disgrace, Sue hides from her husband in a cupboard, and it is in the cupboard that she finds her children dead. These episodes show that the characters are in the power of the past, of heredity, or traits that can't be rooted out.

Margaret Stony aptly says, 'Jude begins as a devout if rather naïve Christian, and dies cursing an unmoved god; Sue begins as a fashionable agonistic,

and ends devoting herself to an imaginary god of worth whom she believes has destroyed her children to bring her to repentance'. Sue's retreat into fanaticism shows her pathetic vanity and her refusal to admit that she can't control her life terrible sufferings and has emerged with a stronger sense of his own identity. Finally, the plot of *Jude* is based on contrast, with pains too long to list: Sue and heathen gods, Jude and his Greek Testament, Jude the theological student and Jude the adulterer, the early Arabella and the saintly Sue, the colleges and slums of Christminster ... so on.

4-MAIN THEMES OF JUDE THE OBSCURE

4.1 Jude's unfulfilled scholastic ambition

Hardy in his well-known letter to Edmund Gosse himself pointed out the main themes of the novel which are mainly two-fold. Laurence Lerner says, 'It is concerned first with the labours of a poor student to get a university degree, and secondly with the tragic issues of two bad marriages'. He further adds, 'The book is all contrasts – or was meant to be in its original conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make it! – eg; Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the pagan, Sue the saint; marriage, I no marriage; C;&C'. Emphasizing the same point, Patricia Ingham asserts, 'the theme of unfulfilled academic aims is the core of *Jude the Obscure*'.

4.2 Jude as a Dreamer

Jude as a scholar is not a total failure; he does keep his faith alive first by distant glimpses of the lights of Christminster, and later learns in spite of all vicissitudes, a good deal of Latin and Greek with arduous self-study under difficult circumstances. Jude talks of Christminster, questions men on the road about it, dreaming about it all the time. He revisits the spot again and again. Like a romantic idealist he soliloquises:

'It is a city of light', he said to himself. 'The tree of knowledge grows there', he added a few steps further on.

'It is a place that teachers of men spring from and go to'. It is what you may call a castle, manned by scholarship and religion' (PP.49-50).

Even while selling bread in a cart Marygreen, he engages himself in reading the classics. Later as a mason in Aldbrickham and in Christminster he pursues his studies. Hardy himself, in the words of Raymond Williams was 'an auto-didactic', and there must be much of his own experience in that picture. All his heroic efforts in this direction are crushed and defeated by Christminster's rejection of him and his own betrayal of his dreams – all on account of his weakness of the flesh, which he cannot overcome.

4.3 Theme of love and marriage

In the novel, the theme of love is linked with the question of marriage. Hardy's treatment of love and his views on the subject are as varied and elusive as the views on marriage. In the early novels, love for his heroines is a mere fanciful desire to be admired. Sometimes, there is fickleness when the object of admiration changed. After *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), the theme has tragic overtones when wrong decisions cannot be easily reversed. In *Tess* and *Jude* love is mixed up with several other issues pertaining to religious, legal, social and ethical questions. Love loses its romantic and illusory colouring. In both *Tess* and *Jude* love is a miserable experience with very little companionship or understanding between partners.

Hardy's reticence on the subject of the sexual basis of love and marriage in his earlier novels gradually gave way to an increasing candour in his later treatment of the subject. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), Hardy for the first time refers to the sexual basis of marriage 'which he depicts as a puzzle'. In *Tess*, it becomes the basis of the heroine's tragedy; she is tortured emotionally, socially and morally as a consequence. In *Jude*, all the barriers of reticence are set aside, and Hardy has said on the war between the sexes. All the four characters are deeply involved in this problem of intimate physical relationships. Hardy comes very close to D.H.Lawrence in the treatment of this theme. Certainly, Sue has her brief but happy companionship with Jude for at least two and a half years as long as they are united in their revolt against tradition. This is the only interlude of happiness during their painful struggle of life. No wonder, Desmond Hawkins in his book on Hardy refers to Hardy as the pioneer of the modern sex novel.

The marriage question is more central to the novel than the theme of Jude's scholastic ambition. In the course of the novel, Jude comments about Sue, 'she does not realize what marriage means' (P.191). Throughout the novel none of the characters really understand exclusively what marriage implies. The entire novel presents discussions on the subject – theory always clashing with reality. Hardy had witnessed the plays of Ibsen, particularly *Doll's House*, and the concept of the 'New Woman' certainly determined the creation of Sue Bridehead. Like the Ibsen's problem play, *Jude the Obscure* is a 'discussion novel' (novel of ideas) where varieties of ideas are projected on the subject of marriage. 'In Hardy's later years, he became more and more influenced by the naturalistic creed. New revolutionary attitudes led him to deal with heredity and social environment determining tragedies in marriages. Hardy's bitterness on the subject is probably also rooted in personal experience'.

The 'marriage question' is a very important subject in the novel with a number of nagging questions. A series of inexplicable events unfold the bewildering complexity of Sue's nature. For instance, it is difficult to guess why Sue marries Phillotson when there is not even any physical attraction as in the case of Jude's marriage. That she was something of a 'tomboy' as a little girl is part of Aunt Drusilla's account in the earlier chapters. That she is coquettish and loves to be admired is evidenced in her heartless affair with the university scholar who dies due to her callousness. That she is 'sexless' or 'epicene' is part of Hardy's own enigmatic comment, although Hardy himself insisted that she was a healthy woman with normal instincts. Her physical dislike for Phillotson and subsequent refusal to lead a normal sex life with Jude are symptoms of an abnormality. However, as in *Tess*, there are gaps in the narration where the reader is only left to guess.

4.4 War between flesh and spirit

Hardin Gaig states, 'Jude the Obscure awoke a storm of moral protest as to its subject, its (to some) obscene frankness, and its implications as to the state and nature of modern society as regards justice and mercy'. Rutland maintains, 'Jude is a treatise upon the misery of human life. Hardy wrote it in order to show human beings brought to agony, ruin and death by circumstances over which they

have no control'. Hardy also stated very clearly in his preface to the first edition that it is the theme of the 'deadly war between flesh and spirit'. The ambiguity can be stated thus: the physical desire for Arabella leads Jude away from the things of the spirit and the spiritual side of Jude's relationship with Sue is threatened by her lack of sexual drive. Apart from this, Jude tells Sue that their war 'is only against man and senseless circumstance'. However, the issues in the novel are complex and they impinge on each other.

4.5 Theme of two bad marriages resulting divorce

Jude the Obscure is the first novel where divorce becomes an accomplished fact. As in *Jude, The Return of the Native* also depicts the tragedy of two bad marriages, where the pairs get separated under tragic circumstances. In *The Woodlanders* for the first time, Hardy was emboldened to broach the subject of legal separation as inevitable in a bad marriage – the happy ending is only for the very ordinary reader. Hardy himself comments in *Heart's Magazine* (June 1912) that, 'the English marriage laws are, to the eyes of anybody who looks around, the gratuitous cause of at least half the misery of the community, And can only be accounted for by the assumption that we live in a barbarous age, and are the slaves of gross superstition'. He expressed the strong feeling that 'a marriage should be dissolvable on the wish of either party, if that party can prove a cruelty to him or her, provided (probably) that the maintenance of the children (if any) should be borne by the bread-winner'.

In *Jude*, the two bad marriages have to be dissolved. At the time of writing this novel, 'the parnell case' had created a storm in London society which must have affected Hardy's thinking. There are two divorces in the novel – the first being Jude's break with Arabella soon after the failure of the marriage. But Sue, granted a divorce by the kind Phillotson goes back to Jude. Her arguments with Phillotson and with Jude on the subject of divorce are wayward. She confesses to Jude: 'Sometimes a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she does not love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong'

(P.256). Her intellectual debates quoting J.S.Mill and other thinkers is rationally tenable and shows a brave and rebellious temper. She says, 'Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified. If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others!...(P.239). Later she says, 'J.S.Mill's words those are. I have been reading it up' (P.239). This courage is only at the surface and she breaks down when faced with the crises in her life. Jude himself is tossed about following Sue's volatile moods and actions. The net result is a terribly confused state of affairs.

Marriage is a sacrament in the church when Jude and Arabella and later Sue and Phillotson go through the religious ceremony. It sanctifies a permanent bond. The former union proves to be short lived and disastrous. The second is a mere farce with Jude giving away the bride. 'Sue compares a bride to a sacrificial heifer'. Her letter asking Jude, 'will you give me away? (P.189) is likely sarcastic about this giving. Sue feels, 'somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal'(P.189). Sue refuses to go through such a ceremony again. Both Jude and Sue are heretics when they refuse to go through the marriage after their divorces.

The legal aspect of marriage also comes in for examination. In the Preface to the 1912 edition of *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy speaks of 'the marriage laws being used in great part as the tragic machinery of the tale', when presenting a rational attitude to divorce. The court is a man-made institution. Sue and Jude rebel when they seek divorce from their partners; but deep down in their hearts the conventional feeling persists that their divorce is not sanctioned by the church. It is obvious that they consider themselves sinners and heretics. They collapse under shocks which drive them back to their original partners.

5- JUDE AS A UNIQUE MALE PROTAGONIST

5.1 Jude is different from other male characters

The character of Jude has no parallel among Hardy's male figures. An idealist like Clym, a dreamer like Angel Clare, isolated and lonely like Henchard, he is still like none of them. Hardy even refutes his own concept of tragedy in the creation of this character – there is little that is heroic or great about him. The

odd mixture of nobility and sensitiveness on the one hand and his weakness for wine and women on the other is peculiar and distinct. His inability to act positively contrasts oddly with his ambition and ideals. Yet this 'poor puppet' falls a prey to the physical charms of Arabella in the most tragic and ironic manner. He thinks of himself as an altogether different man from what he used to be. For him, 'It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate' (P.72). Being an extremely simple man, he is unable to perceive the cunning devices of Arabella to trap him. One cannot help pitying the gullibility of Jude when he is ensnared by Arabella's falsity and lies. His marriage with her, Hardy comments, is a 'sordid contract' – 'a permanent contract based on temporary feeling'.

5.2 Jude's sympathetic attitude

The boy Jude Fawley, living in the village of Marygreen, is helped by the local school master Richard Phillotson, who moves to the university town of Christminster (Oxford) to become a graduate. Jude's eyes fill with tears at the departure of his teacher, revealing the tender nature of the child. Jude, Hardy says was, 'a thoughtful child who has felt the pricks of life before his time'. His sympathy for the birds is partly because they seemed like himself. Michael Millgate points out, 'while we may sympathize with his compassion for the birds he is supposed to be scaring away, we also smile at his lack of practical good sense'. The tragedy of situations encountered by Jude have often a touch of the ludicrous, Jude being 'a simple fool' deceived repeatedly because of his child-like innocence. Jude is a strict and formal person – 'an order loving man' rather than the enemy of society he could be mistaken for. In the words of Prof.A.N.Jeffares, 'He has the instincts of a gentle man despite his lowly birth, and protects those weaker than himself: women, children, animals'. Arabella refers to him as a 'tender-hearted fool' (P.87).

As a boy Jude could not bear anyone hurting any creature. Hardy himself states, 'Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony' (P.42). When the novel opens, Phillotson is about to leave for Christminster, to become a graduate. Before he

departed, he has told Jude to be kind to animals and birds. Being advised by Phillotson, he lets the birds peck the corns of grain, which is being observed by the Farmer himself.

5.3 Jude's dream for academic pursuits

It's Jude's desire to shift to Christminster is apparently for his academic pursuits. His nocturnal visits to the university symbolize his romantic dreams which contrast oddly with the ugly truths he is forced to face in the day light. In truth, his secret yearning is to search for his cousin Sue. Jude's romantic curiosity for her is stirred by the information gathered from his aunt. All his spare time is taken up in this search for her and the desire for proximity. Commenting on Hardy's treatment of this situation, Prof.Harry Thurston Pick says, 'The fact is that Mr.Hardy tries to ride two horses – to be at one and the same time a romanticist and a realist; demanding for himself the romanticist's license in plot and the realist's license in incident'.

5.4 Jude's weakness and self-abnegation

The portrayal of Jude is undoubtedly one of Hardy's great achievements in the creation of male characters. The novelist traces the development of Jude from the age of eleven onwards till he dies prematurely at the age of thirty, a development in which the reader finds no improbability and nothing far-fetched or strained. His sense of honour is evident from the circumstances in which he marries Arabella. He is equally and even more devoted to Sue. She apostrophises thus to Jude, 'you are Joseph the dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And tragic Don Quixote ... O my poor friend and comrade, you'll suffer yet! (P.222).

Jude's integrity can never be in doubt; he himself describes his weakness: 'My two Arch enemies you know – my weakness for womankind and my impulse to strong liquor'. Like Tess, he blames only himself and never Sue. Hardy's comment about Tess that 'No one blamed her as she blamed herself' is true of Jude also. His remark, 'My God, how selfish I was! Perhaps – perhaps I spoilt one of the highest and purest loves that ever existed between man and woman!' shows his self-abnegation. He continues to love Sue through all her peculiar vagaries.

6-SOCIAL OSTRACISM IN THE NOVEL

The social ostracism that Jude and Sue suffer is more tormenting than anything else. Angry eyes frown on

these two simple love-birds, who cannot even find suitable lodging for their stay. Losing his occupation, Jude cannot even be a baker. In the words of Ian Gregor, 'they were not at war with God, only with society,they were cowed down by the mere judgement of man upon them, and all the while by their own souls they were right'. They are social outcasts – ship wrecked, trapped and tortured by a perverse social environment which they cannot escape. This is the modernity about Jude.

The deepest anguish suffered by Jude and Sue is their own awareness of their sin. The ethical question is the conventional aspect of the problem. As Irving Howe says, 'Jude is in constant revolt against his own nature'. Jude and Sue cannot run away from themselves. The self-mortification suffered by Sue following her reconversion to religion cracks her. Jude, with all his earnest love cannot restore her to her former rebellious and brave idealism. For Jude, everything is lost when Sue is lost. And for Sue all is lost when she takes her irrevocable decision to submit to her husband. The psychological breakdown of Jude and Sue is the climax of the tragedy.

7-HARDY'S PORTRAYAL OF OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

7.1 Sue Bridehead

The portrayal of Sue is the major achievement of the novel. Her nature is both warm and cold, passionate and fragile. She is irresistible, mystifying, and sometimes can be very exasperating. Jude addresses her as 'a distinct type – a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left intact'(P.352). He felt that she 'was impossible as a human wife to any average man' (P.205). In a letter to Edmond Gosse, Hardy wrote: 'Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now'. In the course of the novel, 'Sue is consistently one thing and then another; severe and then kindly; inviting and then offish'. Irving Howe describes her as 'promethean in mind but masochist in character'. Phillotson says, 'Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper' (P.245). Jude describes her as 'a woman – poet, a woman seer' (P.358).

There is some incongruity in attaching 'bride' to the name of the young woman who suspects the very

institution of marriage. Laurence Lerner comments, 'She becomes too much of a pamphlet and platform victim of the cruel marriage bond. Sue could love, and was not well fitted for marriage life'. Explaining her opposition to marriage, she says to Jude: 'Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all. In fifty, a hundred years the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we' (P.299). She tells Jude that though she is called Mrs. Phillotson, she is not really so. The problem becomes more complicated and sparingly painful after Sue's escape from Phillotson. Sue herself confesses, 'though I like Mr. Phillotson as a friend, I don't like him – it is a torture to me to – live with him as a husband!(P.255). She says, 'I think I should begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a government stamp and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you, ...'(P.273).

Sue is afraid of marriage due to several reasons – a legal 'contract' she fears, will end real love. A contract, she doubts, will make a woman permanently bound to a man, which idea repels her. Sue cherishes her independence and individuality. So, 'when Jude proposes marriage, she replies, Never (P.354). Quite in contradiction to this, there are her unconscious religious and ethical fears. She says to Jude, 'Don't come near me, Jude, because you must n't. Don't – Don't! (P.230). The puzzled Jude justifiably addresses her thus: 'You spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear tantalizing phantom – hardly flesh at all! (P.259). Sue is a perpetual state of perplexity where she can never make up her mind and find happiness or peace.

7.2 Arabella

Arabella is as much a convention in the history of the novel as She is an original. She is voluptuous and sensual. Richard carpenter comments, 'Arabella is not evil, scheming or vivacious, but a careless, erring, selfish woman who thinks of her own comfort and security first and of ethical matters second, if at all'. Arabella is a rare type of female in Hardy's fiction. Even Mrs. Charmond or Lucetta are not like her. Evelyn Hardy comments, 'The sensual Arabella with her temporary religious conversion is a female Alec'. She plays a weighty role in the plot in so far as she is the first hindrance in the fulfilment of Jude's intellectual ambitions. It is queer that

Arabella should be the mother of Father Time, the child who brings about the tragedy in the life of Sue and Jude.

7.3 Phillotson

Phillotson is the most ill-used of characters in the novel. He is kind and cruel, selfish and unselfish in turns. His general permission to Sue to leave him contrasts oddly with his thoughtless and cruel desire to possess her again. He is drawn as a mild eccentric, a man with an ‘unhealthy looking, old fashioned face’. Marlene Springer describes his slow speech as indicative of his personality and that he is a philistine as his name implies. He is also sensitive, compassionate, yet basically ineffectual. Like Jude, Phillotson also begins as a conventional type of man and later takes the drastic decision to release her from the bond. The only fault of Phillotson is his magnanimity which makes it impossible for him to endure Sue’s misery under his roof when her heart is yearning for Jude’s companionship. To think that Sue’s return to Phillotson would be a source of any real happiness to him, is an illusion; it would be cold comfort for any man to hold in his arms a wife who is no better than a living corpse.

7.4 Father Time

Father Time is the most terrifying juvenile creation in English fiction. He is a highly precocious child. He is extremely thoughtful, gloomy, and morbid, like a philosopher who dwells on the melancholy side of life. He is ‘Age masquerading as Juvenility’ (P.289). He almost strikes one as a spectre of Hardy’s imagination. Little Abraham in Tess anticipates this portrait to a certain degree. Jude as a child is himself another prototype of this seamy portrayal of childhood. There is not another such character like him. Sue’s pity for this child is touching – he evokes the maternal tenderness which is innate in her nature. The horrible climax is when Little Father Time becomes possessed of the idea that he and other children are obstructions to their parents’ chance of happiness. In this context, Sue and Little Father Time talk together:

‘It would be better to be out O’ the world than in it, wouldn’t it?’
 ‘It would almost, dear’
 ‘It is because of us children too, isn’t it, that you can’t get a good loading?’

‘But we don’t ask to be born?’
 ‘No indeed’ (P.289).

The prospect of another child coming shocks him into the desperate step of murder and suicide. Father Time’s cryptic note is: ‘Donne because we are too menny’(P.345); Hardy explains, ‘It is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live’. Father Time is thus an exaggerated extension of the bitter boyhood of Jude.

8-HUMAN KINSHIP IN JUDE

For Hardy, the quality of life is traced partly in human kinship. John Holloway rightly points out, ‘In Jude the continuity of kinship is perhaps even more prominent, as we watch Jude and Sue running constantly into trouble both through the unnoticed impress of their heredity, and their confused consciousness of it’. Jude’s falling in love with his cousin Sue, is a bad choice as they have a common ancestry in person disposed to suicide and marital unhappiness. His aunt tells him that the Fawleys are not made for wedlock. Jude comes to feel that, ‘Their lives were ruined, he thought: ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable’ (P.93).

It is noticeable that all the characters in the novel represent some aspect of Jude himself, without giving up their individual vitality. Jude himself is both a symbolic hero and a real man. He has echoes of the founder of the Christian religion, heroes of tragic drama and the Bible. Sue is Jude’s blood relation and he is so enchanted by her charm, sensitivity and cleverness that he can’t see that her qualities are dangerously double-edged. Arabella, in her shameless earthiness parodies physical desires which humble him in his pursuit of godliness and Sue. Both Arabella and Sue are, as Margaret Stony remarks, ‘two women of equal but different beauty are shown competing for the attention of the observer, one symbolising his spiritual nature and the other luring him through physical desire to earthly concerns’. Phillotson cherishes the hopes of entering Christminster, and he is rejected by society when he tries to act according to his conscience.

Jude Fawley is the grandest and the humblest aspects of human life. At one level he is a simple

workman; a modern Christ, mysteriously born and fostered in an obscure village, a humble crafts man, a teacher, a moralist and a preacher and sees himself Jude in terms of the human heroes of the Bible: Job who suffered and Samson who was destroyed by the love of women. In his orderliness, Jude becomes the spokesman for countless inarticulate men and women. Yet his relationship to the great heroes of tragedy shows his capacity for greatness. Finally, Hardy draws some tentative parallels between the early stages of his own life and that of Jude. Jude is not a self-portrait, but Hardy is fascinated by the circumstances which could have prevented his becoming a worldly success.

9-TRAGIC PREDICAMENT IN JUDE THE OBSCURE

There is every kind of suffering and failure in Jude the Obscure. This is its great glory as a novel – the passion, the complexity, the completeness, of petty, mean and bitter failure. Waste, oppression, injustice, indifference have soaked into the very soil of life, washing away all of the yearnings and rights of those with unlucky natures or unfortunate birth. Social and spiritual deprivation bears down on the modest persons who have asked only the lightest measure of possibility. Every single character fails – the children, the lovers, the married, the ignorant and the intellectual.

It is said that the novel is rightly entitled as Jude the Obscure as the range and intention of the novelist are wide and unbounded by problems and social issues. Michael Thorpe rightly comments, 'the story derives its force from strong characterisation through which Hardy expressed his bitter sense of the common failure of ideal aspirations in real life'. It is observed from the novel that Jude comes from an 'obscure home'(P.93), and he identifies Sue and himself as 'poor obscure people'(P.310).

Like Angel and Clym, Jude is one of the most complex male characters. Like them, he has some ideas and principles but he is bedevilled with contradictory motives. He is a tender-hearted, honourable and passionate. After Arabella has left him, he resolves to be a companionable cousin to Sue. He sums up the arguments against falling in love with Sue: 'the first reason was that he was married, and it would be wrong. The second was that they were cousins. It was not well for cousins to

fall in love even when the circumstances seemed to favour the passion. The third, even were he free, in a family like his own where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror' (P.105). Later he falls in love with her and ultimately gets children through Sue.

By comparison with *The Return of the Native* and *Tess*, the whole texture of the writing in this novel, and the links that bind men to Nature on the nature of things, has become thin. There is place in Jude the Obscure for the great heroic scenes such as Sergeant Troy's sword-play, and Gabriel Oak's fight to over the wheat-ricks during the furious storm in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the remarkable episode of Wildevine and the riddle man gambling on the heath at night by the light of glow-worms in *The Return of the Native*, or the wonderful opening of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Such scenes could have no place in this novel because they represent a way of life from which Jude and Sue, being working class intellectuals, are totally uprooted.

Jude is no less of a hero to Hardy because he has failed in almost everything that he set out to do. Hardy related Jude the Obscure to a group of novels on the theme of growing-up such as *Great Expectations*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man*, and *Sons and Lovers*. Hardy's version of the strains of an education and the aches of maturity borrows a little of its bitterness from feelings, arising from his visits to Cambridge in *Moule's day*. Nevertheless, let down by every person and institution as Jude is, he remains constant in his beliefs and feelings to the last. This independence of the world's opinion was the quality that Hardy regarded as being valuable and permanent.

Jude the Obscure is a very different kind of novel. The tragedy in it is neither classical nor Shakespearean. Catharsis is absent and there is no note of tranquillity or composure at the end of the suffering. The final impact is shattering with Jude's last terrible words cursing the day of his birth, 'let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which was said, there was a man child conceived ... why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?'(P.408).

Ian Gregor says that endings are always a difficult for Hardy, 'because they implied unity where he saw plurality, they expressed finality where he sought continuity'. Jude's death is conventional ending and Sue's return predicts her inevitable tragedy. The last words about Sue are ironically quoted by Arabella, she's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!(P.413).The ending is still an open ending; the questions remain unanswered.

10- CONCLUSION

In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy brings out many open issues without answers for readers and gives them sympathetic feelings towards life style. Jude was venomously criticized after it's publication due to Hardy's presentation of Victorian marriage law. Hardy portrays Jude as an aspiring and stubborn youth who is pressed to yield to social expectations. Through Jude's tragedy, Hardy hopes that "certain cathartic, Aristotelian qualities might be found therein". In this view, readers are expected to sympathize with the tragic figures and experience their feelings. But Jude is unable to fulfil his desires in the rigid society because of social limitations and inequalities prevailing during that time. In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill, who has a deep influence on Hardy, writes that "human beings should be free to form opinions, and to express their opinions without reserve" (272).It is obvious that the main stream culture of Victorian society focuses mainly on economic value rather than on human value. It's very hard to get a genuine hero during Victorian age because utilitarianism dominates social values and causes the Victorians to favour the importance of materialistic benefits rather than the value of the individual. Seen from this point of view, *Jude the Obscure* impresses the readers from external restraints.

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