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FEMALE SUBJUGATION IN THOMAS HARDY'S *THE MAYOR OF THE CASTERBRIDGE*.

Dr. Parul Singh

Associate professor

Dept. Of English

Raghunath girls PG college Meerut

Abhilasha Yadav

Research scholar

Dept. Of English

Raghunath girls PG College Meerut

ABSTRACT

Subjugation is an integral part of women's life. All women subjugated by males of their families or society. Due to subjugation and suppression of males, women suffer a lot in their life. Suffering is loud and suffering is silent. Suffering is active and suffering is passive. Suffering, according to the Puritan view of human existence is a part of God's scheme of life. Man suffers only to be purified and emerge stronger but human suffering as a result of human operation and human tyranny has a different flavor and requires different values for discussion. Man suffers but woman is often made to suffer. The present paper intends to open a debate on female subjugation as it is taken in the light of a feminist point of view.

Why does a woman suffer? or why she is subjugated? Is a question that requires an immediate attention towards patriarchy. Patriarchy is the main cause of female subjugation and sufferings. This male dominated society is responsible for the suffering of women. In India male domination and suppression of women is coming from ancient time. Women requires men's help in every field of life. Modern civilization is founded by the patriarchal system. Woman occupy a rear seat in the matrix of patriarchal. The holy Bible considers eve under the influence of serpent after her seduction by Satan. As a result a woman is reckoned a born sinner. The tragic suffering of a woman comes from the forces of patriarchy. We have different laws for fallen man and a fallen woman.

Key words: female subjugation, patriarchy, feminine suffering, male domination, woman, society, morals.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy was an English poet and an eminent novelist of Victorian period. He was born on 2nd June 1840, in a Higher Bockhampton at Dorset shire in the South west of England. We can see this part of the country in Hardy's novel as his setting of Wessex. Hardy had a great interest in supernatural and the metaphysical aspects of life. He was the son of a mason. He had seen poverty and privations of life. He also worked with his father as a mason for some time. He had seen people dying of hunger around him in his real life. He loved solitude. His life has factors and forces that developed into his philosophy of human situations and human conditions. He has faced many difficulties in his life. His mother was an educated lady. She was fond of reading. She was kind hearted and sympathetic lady. His mother encouraged him to read and write. He had seen his mother's relationship with his father. They were not happy. Hardy's mother was educated but father was a mason. Because of intense love and passion, they got married. His mother wanted to satisfy herself after marriage. Money was the only source to survive in this world. Hardy's family is a typical Christian. He is baptized in a local church when he is at the 5 weeks only. But after some Time, he has not so much faith in religion. His mother was very much aware and responsive for his education. She wanted that her son will be brilliant in

Latin, French and German. So, his mother decided to send him to study the languages at a non-conformist school in Dorchester. Hardy wins the **Silver Medal of the Royal Institute** of British architects for essay entitled *On the Application of Colored Bricks and Terra Cotta to Modern Architecture*.

Hardy's novels are the mirror of tragic and idyllic life of his rustics. But there is one thing which we can notice here in his fictions. It is the combination of comic ironic and romantic, has been used by Hardy in technical way. He has been considered as a rustic man with complex personality. He seems to live sometimes as polar sights hailing from Dorset.

Hardy has much concern about woman. He has seen women subjugation from very near. He has depicted very minutely the problems of woman. He has seen poverty in his life because he belongs to poor class family. He can understand the situation of low class family. He thinks that the rich class man has no respect for woman. A woman is medium of enjoyment for the rich man. She is like a woman having no ambition, no wish, no reputation etc. But for the poor class people a woman is considered as a woman. She is a person for everybody. It is because she has concern for her family. She does every work according to the needs of her family. A woman is not a commodity to be ravished and thrown away for Hardy. A rich class woman does not have so much reputation in her family.

Hardy's novels are basically woman centered. He depicted the very struggle, condition and suffering of female in his most of the novels. We can see the struggle and sufferings of Tess in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, he has shown how woman is inferior, she is not able to speak against men. How she is rejected by her husband Angel Clare because of her past. Both the people have same past but despite that Tess has forgiven him. But at the same time her husband Angel did not forgive her. So, we can see how she is ill-treated by every male in the novel whether her father, her mother, Alec Durbeyfield or Angel. Everyone has neglected her. At last, she is hanged to death due to being female and due to exploitation.

In the novel *Mayor of the Casterbridge*, the problems and sufferings of a woman is shown very clearly by Hardy from the opening of the novel. In this novel we are introduced with a female character Susan Hanchard, who is the wife of Michael Hanchard. She suffers because of her husband Michael. He takes the drink in firmity tent. He sells his wife in five guineas only in intoxication of alcohol. Susan is trying to forbid him but Michael is not ready to hear anything. He is selling his wife like horses. He announced in public to take his wife and give him money but Susan is trying to control him:

Well than, now is your choice; I am open to an after for this Gem o' creation'' she turned to her husband and murmured. Michael, you have talked this nonsense in public places before. A joke is a joke, but you may make it once too, often, mind! (Pg.17)

Henchard is quite rigid to sell Susan. His intoxication overpowers him. Susan is trying to make him remember again and again that she is his wife. But Michael has his attention only to sell his wife at any condition. Patriarchy is the cause of women's suffering. Man, always wants to dominate on women. Michael ignores his wife's talking like she would be an animal or something else. He returns deaf ear. Susan wants to make him understand that it is getting dark and we shall have to return so soon. But he does not listen anything. Here it is quite clear that Susan is not a woman she is a puppet or a toy in the hands of man, who can make this toy to do anything, whatever else he likes.

Besides, patriarchy, male dominated social morality is also equally responsible for the sufferings of woman. Social morality is a manmade way of life. It is made by male dominated society. Social morality in itself is a hypocrisy which creates many problems for individuals. It is made by the powerful group of the society. But the fact is that the maker of society does not follow it honestly. They make rules for the society, for the country, for lower class people but not for themselves. Social morality can be seen in Susan's back to Casterbridge with her daughter Elizabeth. Susan does not gain a great reputation in the society. He becomes a mayor in spite of being a hay-trusser. When she reaches near the town, surprise to see the crowd around whom the mayor is sitting. Because of society she is unable to convey to her own husband. She thinks in herself that "now surely if he takes so warmly to people who are not related to him at all, may he not take as warmly to his own kin?" Now he is stepping forward towards mayor. She sees a board hanging there. We can quote from the text:

To the shaft of each hung a little board on which was painted in
White letters, ‘‘Henchard, corn factors and hay- merchant the spectacleRenewed his
wife’s conviction that for her daughter’s sake, she shouldStrain a point to rejoin him.
(Pg.75)

We follow the terms and conditions of the society. We do not live for our own sake butfor society. We take decisions according to our needs. Henchard is sitting on the broad table. He is attending a council. Many people are sitting around him. Both Elizabeth and her motherare seeing him. Elizabeth is not aware of her mother’s feeling. Her mother wants to meet him but she does not want to go near him, because society does not allow to do this. She is in dilemma whether she should meet her or no. So, she is seeing him from outside. Her daughter does not know the relationship between Mr. Henchard and her mother. So, she says that what purpose to do this.

The evening is drawing on, mother’’ she said, what do you propose
To do?’’ she was Surprise to find now irresolute her mother had become.
‘‘We must get a place to lie down in,’’ she murmured.
I have seen- Mr. Henchard; and that is all I wanted to do.’’ (Pg.73)

Shakespeare’s observation that *A maiden has thoughts but no tongue* is in fact open for deconstruction in different ways. A woman suffers silently as her joys and pleasures are also passive and voiceless. A woman wants to be generous and kind towards everyone. She never wants to give any trouble to anybody. She faces sufferings, but she cannot see any of her near or dear in trouble. When Susan sees Henchard’s position, she does not want to meet him because shethinks that she is not as equal as he is, so she wants to leave that place. Her daughter is trying to know the reason why she wants to go but her mother does not reveal the secret:

Have you seen him mother? Whispered the girl. ‘‘Yes, yes’’ answered her
Companion handily I have seen him, and. Is enough for me! Now I only want
To go- pass away die.’’Why-o what?’’ She drew closer, and whispered in
her mother’sEar,’’ does seem to you not likely to befriend us?’’ (Pg.59)

A woman suffers because of her own weakness. A Woman is her own enemy. She always suffers from inferiority complex due to her own weakness. While she is not weak in any perspective. It is said that she is her own enemy, this is in fact in the sense that when her girl child is born in the family that time all is well. But after some time, her mother treats her like an enemy. At first, a girl is restricted by her mother and then by her other family members. This is the very pitiable condition of females of twentieth century. In Hardy’s *Mayor of Casterbridge* Susan marries a healthy and muscular man who is hay-trusser by profession. Her sufferings are quite visible. She was not able to fight against her husband’s decision. She has been sold by her husband to an unknown sailor publicly. She tries to forbid her husband but her husband is intoxication. After few times Susan surrenders herself. She does not provide herself before her husband’s rigidity. This is the negative aspect of her life. She should not surrender herself before Henchard. She should not go with the sailor. This is the weakness of her life lead her towards the dearth. She sees the sailor and gets ready to go with him because she does not have any other option. She says:

‘‘Mike’’ she said, ‘I’ve lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but
Temper! I’m no more to’ ee; I’ // try my luck elsewhere. It will be better for me an
Elizabeth- Jane, both. So good by!’’ Seeing the sailor’s arm with her right and mounting
the little girl on her left she went out tent sobbing bitterly. (Pg.20)

Now we can see how fortune plays crucial role in her life. She was not able to think what is write for her that is why she is unable to take the decision. Again, fortune turns and she has to come back to the same place from where she left. Again, Henchard proposes to live with him,here she is totally perplexed what to do or what not to do because Newson, her husband with whom she has gone before 20 years, is not with her now. So, she is bound to accept Henchard’s proposal. She assumes that Newson is died because once he has gone and never comes back. So, she accepts the proposal of Mr. Henchard. Although she is confused to live with him or notbut she does not have another option. Susan does not reveal the secret of Elizabeth Jane before

Henchard. She fears from this because if she reveals the secret of her daughter, he would not accept Elizabeth. Due to her daughter's sake, she does not say anything to Mr. Henchard. This wrong decision of Susan destroys life of her daughter. This secret she envelopes in a letter. Here we can see how Susan faces the uncompromising situation.

Society, morals, cast and creed, church, temple etc. these things play a vital role for bad condition of women. In Hardy's novel church has great role for the suffering of women characters. Church makes the marriages and also breaks the marriages. The laws are made in the name of religion, but the makers of the law do not follow the rules. Church is responsible for the tragic death of Tess. Susan Henchard and Elizabeth suffer because of church morality too. Susan Henchard marries Michael, when he was a hay-trusser. He looks very smart and attractive in his young age. In one place Henchard repents for his marriage. He is intoxicated while going with his wife. He utters some words like he marries Susan in compulsion:

“I married at eighteen like a fool that I was; and this the consequence o't Pointed at himself and with a wave of hand intended to bring out Penuriousness of the exhibition.” (Pg.16)

Susan and Henchard are not happy after marriage, when they are going to Weyden priors. On the way they are very much silent. They are going like strangers. Susan has her daughter with her. They don't utter a single word with each other it seems like they are not happy with each other. After sometime Susan's one wrong decision makes worst her daughter's life. Although she does not think that her daughter will not face any difficulty but unknowingly, she destroys her daughter's life. She wants that Farfrae and Elizabeth Jane would marry each other. Farfrae already marries Lucetta. This one wrong decision makes Elizabeth's life miserable. Elizabeth is in very much depression when she gets the news of Lucetta and Farfrae's marriage. Her heart breaks into pieces when she heard these things. Lucetta has done these things very cleverly. She befools Henchard and his daughter too. So, Elizabeth's decision of living with Lucetta leads her to these miserable conditions. She is not aware of these things. She is very much innocent girl. Nobody has said to her to live with Lucetta. This is her own decision. Michael Henchard has intervened but due to her daughter's own decision he has not forced Elizabeth for anything. When she gets aware of everything she wants to go from there.

Fate and chance are the central thing in the novel of Thomas Hardy. In his novel it seems that the characters are responsible for miss happenings in their life. It is noticed that in Hardy's novel, Fate and chance works in a particular way. His concept of metaphysical power that rules over the universe, defeats characters efforts for happiness. He never accepts God as kind, merciful and benevolent power. He thinks that events are ironically contrived by supernatural power that always seems to be hostile mankind. He never believes that fate and chance is ever favorable to human beings. Hardy presents the ironical circumstances of human life through his novels. His characters are not responsible for the frustration and despair of their lives. They lose their chance and meet their downfall. It seems that Hardy uses fate and chance as strolling signs in his novels. In Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* Elizabeth Jane and Susan are also victim of fate and chance. They face many problems due to their fate. By the sheer chance she has been sold by her husband. She comes back to Casterbridge again she starts her new life. But she dies soon. She thinks that shadow of her past would never reflect on her daughter's life. But coincidently she gets all the information:

“Susan Henchard’s daughter bore up against the frosty ache of the treatment. She had warned up under worst things, and contrive as soon as possible to get out of the inharmonious room without being missed. The Scotchman seemed hardly the same Farfrae who had danced with her and walked with her in a delicate poise between love and friendship-that period in the history of a love when alone it can be said to be unalloyed with pain. she stoically looked from her bedroom window, and contemplated her fate as if it were written on the top of church tower hard by “yes” she said at last, bringing down her palm upon the sill with a pat: “he is the second man of that story she told me!” (Pg.173)

To conclude it can be said that this paper has presented the subjugation of females, sufferings and problems of females, especially of Susan and Elizabeth Jane very minutely. Both women characters are victims of patriarchal society as well as fortune itself. They are subjugated by males throughout the story. Through the novel Hardy portrayed a clear picture of twentieth century women’s condition. Despite having equal rights as men they are unable to get equal rights as men. They are unable to get equal treatment from the society as well as from the family.

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