



Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar

School of Humanities & Languages

Department of English

Topic - "TESS OF D'URBERVILLES' by THOMAS HARDY"

Presented by
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1) THOMAS HARDY: ABOUT THE AUTHOR:-

- THOMAS HARDY (1840-1928)
- A representative Victorian Novelist.
- WESSEX: a locale (semi-fictionalized country)
- First Novel: 'THE POOR MAN AND THE LADY '(1867- 68)
- Last Novel: ' Jude the Obscure '(1895)
- Both in the novels and poetry, Hardy was influenced by romanticism,esp.
- Wordsworth. But then, in the later years,
- he was profoundly influenced by the
- Philosophers: CHARLES DARWIN, SWINBURNE, ROBERT BROWNING, ZOLA, SOPHOCLES, AESCHYLUS, HOMER , SCHOPENHAUER, SHAKESPEARE etc.

2) SELECT NOVELS:

- DESPERATE REMEDIES (1871)
- UNDER THE GREENWOOD (1872)
- A PAIR OF BLUE EYES (1873)
- FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD (1874).
- THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE (1878)
- THE THREE STRANGERS(1883)
- THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE (1886)
- THE WOODLANDERS (1887)
- TESS OF D'URBERVILLES (1891)
- JUDE THE OBSCURE (1895).

3) HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE:

- He believed in the incoherence of the empirical world.
- He deeply believed in the philosophy of chance, coincidence and Fate.
- Chance and coincidence for HARDY are the blind forces of Nature/Fate beyond human control.
- For Hardy, life is suffering. Man suffers from the moment of his birth upto his death.
- Hence, HARDY was profoundly influenced by Darwin's theory of "NATURAL SELECTION ", ZOLA'S THEORY OF ' DETERMINISM ', SCHOPENHAUER 'S PHILOSOPHY OF ' PESSIMISM ', the Greek tragic playwrights and Shakespeare's tragedies. etc.

4) TESS OF D'URBERVILLES at a glance:

- CHAPTERS (1- 11) FIRST PHASE:

THE MAIDEN: Introduction of the Durbeyfield family & their remotest connection to the D'URBERVILLES

Of the NORMAN CONQUEST. The heroine is described as innocent, lively, charming and appealing. While returning from the "CEREALIA ' , a local celebration, Tess comes across ALEC ,

a stranger who will behave with her brutally later. Hence the introduction of the novel tells us about the setting, theme of past and present, roles of chance and coincidence and the unique

character and personality of TESS. In short, Hardy's typical narrative art of regional, nostalgic, ironic, vibrant, graphic style is vividly described in the

- BEGINNING OF THE NOVEL.

5) PHASE- TWO: RAPE/SEDUCTION OF TESS BY ALEC (CHAPTERS 12-15)

- PHASE THREE: CHAPTERS 16-24. NATURE AND FROOM VALLEY.
- PHASE FOURTH: CHAPTERS 25-34

Meeting of Tess and Angel Clare, a ceremonious and idealistic Christian who feels captivated by Tess's beauty and agreed to marry.

- PHASE FIFTH: CHAPTERS 35-44
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- TESS AND ANGEL CLARE MARRY BUT DEPART THEREAFTER, AS HE GOES TO BRAZIL AND PROMISES TESS TO RETURN IN THREE YEARS. IT'S IRONICAL THAT WHEN HE RETURNS, HE IS SHOCKED TO FIND TESS AND ALEC LIVING TOGETHER. BESIDES ANGEL CLARE'S DOUBTFUL NATURE AND TOO MUCH IDEALISM, ALEC'S CUNNING, PRACTICAL, SENSUOUS AND PREDOMINANT DISPOSITION ENABLE HIM TO PERSUADE TESS TO CONSENT TO BE HIS PARTNER.

PHASE SIXTH: CHAPTERS 45-52: ALICE AGAIN IN TESS'S LIFE

- Alec has been presented as a 'Convert' as he convinces Tess that he's, no longer, a sinner, or a corrupt person. But then, Tess knows it well and Hardy also informs us that Alec's basic nature of
- hedonism and sensuality have remained unchanged. It's quite true because Alec has pretended all this to regain Tess's lost love and partnership as he knows her helpless condition of destitution and loneliness. Alec manages to convince Tess that Angel Clare (with whom she is betrothed) wouldn't return. Out of desperation, Tess had to resume Alec's partnership in living relationship. Soon after, Angel Clare appears and feels shock to see this drastic change in Tess.
- This is ironical that the letter which Tess wrote to Angel Clare does not reach him. Tess knows and intuits Alec's machinations and manipulation of all this. Out of sheer frustration, she murders Alec for which she is convicted.

SUB-TITLE " PURE WOMAN " .

- It's striking that Hardy calls his Tess "A Pure Woman" although she has committed the heinous crimes of adultery, murder and wayward behavior. It's really a good defence of Tess's character because, like Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, Shakespeare's Isabella (Measure for Measure), Greene's Scobie, she doesn't suffer from hypocrisy and malice. She maintains the basic human virtues of love, trust, warmth, fortitude, perseverance, innocence and vitality. All these things raise her in our estimates and towards the end of the novel, when she is executed, she stirs us like an Angel.

PHASE SEVENTH: CHAPTERS 53-59:

- Hardy entitled this phase 'FULFILLMENT'.
- This marks the Ending of the novel.
- Tess is convicted and executed. At the inhuman and immature legal verdict, Hardy shows his outrage and ironically attacks the so-called custodians of justice and order in society. Hardy makes a poignant observation of the pathetic situation of Tess: "Justice was done" and 'The President of Immortals' (Aeschylean phrase) has finished his sport with Tess". Hardy, perhaps the greatest tragic novelist of English, rightly comments on the 'Divine Comedy' of wanton destruction of many by the brutal and blind forces of Nature and Fate. Hardy rightly recalls Shakespeare's immortal observation on human tragedy in KING LEAR: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to Gods; they kill us for their sport". It is where Hardy's philosophy of pessimism and fatalism and Determinism come to fulfillment which ironically justifies the ending of the novel.

6) COMMONLY USED QUOTES FROM THOMAS HARDY:

- HAPPINESS IS BUT AN OCCASIONAL EPISODE IN THE GENERAL DRAMA OF PAIN. (THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE).
- DONE BECAUSE WE ARE TOO MERRY. (JUDE THE OBSCURE).
- AND YET TO EVERY BAD THERE IS A WORSE. (THE WOODLANDERS).
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- IF WAY TO THE BETTER THERE BE, IT EXACTS A FULL LOOK AT THE WORST. (TENEBRIS- 2, A POEM)
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- "JUSTICE WAS DONE AND THE ' PRESIDENT OF IMMORTALS ' (IN AESCHYLEAN PHRASE) HAS ENDED HIS SPORT WITH TESS. (TESS OF D' URBERVILLES).

PROBABLE SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE NOVEL:

- 1. CHARACTER OF ALEC
- 2. CHARACTER OF ANGEL CLARE
- 3. OPENING OF THE NOVEL
- 4. ENDING OF THE NOVEL
- 5. SUB-TITLE " PURE WOMAN ".
- 6. HARDY'S USE OF 'WESSEX' IN THE NOVEL.

OR

- HARDY'S REGIONALISM

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE NOVEL:

1. WHICH FACTOR IS MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR TESS'S TRAGEDY IN THE NOVEL-- FATE, CHARACTER OR BOTH? JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER.
2. WHAT IS HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN TRAGEDY? ELUCIDATE WITH REFERENCE TO 'TESS OF D'URBERVILLES '.
3. WRITE A CRITICAL NOTE ON HARDY'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AS EMPLOYED BY HIM IN 'TESS OF D'URBERVILLES '.
4. DO YOU AGREE TO THE STATEMENT "TESS IS MORE SINNED AGAINST THAN SINNING' "? EVALUATE.
5. ON THE BASIS OF THE READING OF THE NOVEL ' TESS OF D'URBERVILLES ', DO YOU CONSIDER THOMAS HARDY AS A TRADITIONAL NOVELIST OR A MODERN NOVELIST? SUBSTANTIATE.

THANK YOU!