

## Chapter – X

# Jude the Obscure

In Tess Hardy has only accused the society but there was no challenge to the oppressive institutionalized codes. He shows only the oppression and exploitation within the traditional ideology. In Jude the Obscure Hardy challenges the Victorian code of marriage through Sue Bridehead, a highly intellectual, emancipated woman. She rebelled against the prevailing concept of marriage, love and matrimony. Hardy's 'use of emancipated - woman motif in the representation of Sue Bridehead is clear in a Postscript to 1912 edition of the novel where Hardy informs that

a German reviewer told him that Sue Bridehead the heroine was the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year - the woman of the feminist movement - the slight, pale bachelor girl - the intellectualized - the emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing mainly in cities as yet; who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession - and boast themselves as superior people because they are licensed to be loved on the premises (Jude the Obscure, 9-10, hereafter cited as JO).

Sue Bridehead the 'New Woman of the feminist movement' rejects the conventional bond of marriage and explores an alternative relationship out of the conventional bond. Hardy hints at re-structuring of man - woman relationship by giving woman the right to control their body and sexuality and in this novel his views anticipates those of the radical feminists and their idea that marriage brings sufferings and mental breakdown in women. Hardy shows Sue in her relentless campaign against the institution of marriage and is shown to be ahead of her time anticipating some of the demands of the radical feminists of the twentieth century. The marriage codes are oppressive to her, and she too considers it monstrous that a married woman should be considered a property of her husband and advocates for a free sexual relationship coming out of the institutionalized codes of the society. Sue's struggle for re - structuring man - woman relationship invited the wrath and

punishment of the orthodox patriarchal society. Sue miserably fails to continue her struggle for establishing a society free from oppressive codes of marriage and sexuality. Though Sue is shown victimised for her radical thinking, the process of re-structuring of man - woman relationship gets the necessary impetus. Her radical views can be said to have materialized in the form of suffragist movement of the early 1940s.

Hardy's representation of Sue as a woman of ideas and with strong anti - marriage feeling was obviously influenced by the New Woman movement of the 1890s. The New Woman challenged the biological definition of womanhood and took control of her body. She denied the cultural construction of femininity invented by the patriarchal society and exhibited a strong anti - marriage sentiment. Conventional marriage is a kind of trap for her. Hardy was an ardent reader of the 'New Woman' novels and with some of the new woman novelists of the period he had personal relationship. The New Woman novelists of the period viz. Sarah Grand, Allen Grant, Mrs. Oliphant, George Egerton, and Mona Caird conveyed anti - marriage feelings in their novels and they depicted womanhood with ideas. Gail Cunningham informs:

Hardy had met both Grant Allen and Menie Muriel Dowie; he owned a copy of The Woman Who Did and Sarah Grand had sent him The Heavenly Twins as 'a very inadequate acknowledgement of all she owes to his genius. Even so, it might be argued that the heroines of these novels belong mostly to the pure rather than neurotic school or less like Sue Bridehead than the New Woman of George Egerton model. However Hardy had not only read Keynotes but had been sufficiently impressed to copy out lengthy passages into his note book (Cunningham: 1978, 105 ).

Most of the 'New Woman' novelists dealt with the theme of free love. Olive Schreiner, George Egerton, and Grant Allen in their novels refused to compromise with the conventional norms showing their heroines' refusal to compromise. Olive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm (1883) represents a heroine who rejects traditional sexual roles. She rejects the bond of marriage and thinks marriage as a kind of trap to women. Grant Allen's The Woman Who Did (1895) depicts a heroine who denounces marriage as "vile

slavery" and she declares 'freedom from the slavery'. Heroine of Mona Caird's novel The Daughters of Danaus wants to get rid of her husband and at one point she abandons her marriage. But ultimately she is forced to accept domestic life and is subjected to tedious domestic duties. As Gail Cunningham observes: "The New Woman's ideals were far too advanced for her environment. These novelists were trying to do two things at once: firstly to argue moral and social case for a high degree of emancipation and secondly, to show how firmly entrenched were the creeds and conventions which oppressed women" (Cunningham: 1978, 49). These women novelists showed that the women had to pay dearly in the forms of mental breakdown madness or suicide for holding unconventional attitude towards marriage and sexuality. Mentally broken these women submitted to the traditional ideology or death. In a Preface to the 1912 edition of the novel Hardy acknowledges that marriage question is the central theme of Jude the Obscure. The marriage laws being used in great part as the tragic machinery and its general drift on the economic side tending to show that in Diderot's words, 'the civil law should be only the enunciation of the law of nature '(Preface to JO, VIII).As Penny Boumelha says: "It seems that , with the advent of 'Ibsensity' and the problem play, the marriage question and New Woman Novel, Hardy was able for the first time in a major work to place the examination of sexual relationships openly at the centre of the novel, and to take the tragedy turn on marriage , instead of displacing it with the more traditional materials of tragedy, he had done earlier"(Boumelha: 2000,56). Hardy viewed that marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty, to either of the parties - being then essentially no marriage. Hardy's disillusionment with the institution of marriage grew bleaker in each of his successive novels. Particularly in his last three novels viz. The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'urbervilles, and Jude the Obscure he directly attacked the contemporary marriage code, and in Jude he voiced his strongest resentment. The narrative projects Sue Bridehead as a woman who resists the idea of conventional marriage challenging its religious and ethical perspectives. Hardy narrates ironically the marriage between Jude and Arabella at the beginning of the novel. Marriage in Hardy's novels does not bring any happiness and harmony to the contracting parties. Hardy exposes the absurdity of Jude - Arabella

marriage. As Jude's marriage to Arabella is characterised by Hardy's bitter comment: "And so, standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feed, and desire precisely as they had believed, felt and desired during the few preceeding weeks what was as remarkable as the undertaking itself was the fact that nobody seemed at all surprised at what they swore"( JO, 66-67 ).

Hardy contrasts two marriages in the novel to show the inequities of the institution of marriage. The two marriages turn into utter failure. Hardy stresses the idea that conventional marriage ideology brings tragic consequences on Jude and Sue's life for basing their permanent contract on a temporary feeling which brings Jude temporary disruption in his academic pursuits and his disillusionment with Arabella's sexual charms. But in case of Sue cruelty of marriage contract is more radical and tragic. Next Hardy narrates the marriage between Sue and Phillotson. Sue marries Phillotson out of her sense of duty and without perceiving what a sordid thing marriage contract is Sue feels that she gets trapped by the codes of marriage. She gets disillusioned with the bond and feels that marriage is a kind of slavery. Her independent, emancipated sensibility perceives that marriage requires sacrifice of her identity. Sue, 'a woman of the feminist movement' voices her radical views on marriage, as she says: "If a marriage ceremony is a religious thing it is possibly wrong, but if it is only a sordid contract based on material convenience in householding, rating and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children making it necessary that the male parent should be known which it seems be - why, surely a person may say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts and grieves him or her"(JO, 250). She thinks that modern marriage is synonymous with slavery and her anti-marriage sentiment echoes Friedrich Engels. Engels in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State writes:

In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, and a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the

men. This situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamous individual family. The administration of the household management lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production . . . . The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules (Engels in Scheiner ed. 1997, 200).

Sue's brief married life with Phillotson leads her to realize the true nature of marriage. Sue believes that conventional marriage subjugates a woman. We get a glimpse of Sue's feeling on marriage when she writes a letter to Jude on marriage service: "my bridegroom chooses on his own will and pleasure but I don't choose him. Somebody gives me to him like a she ass or she goat or any other domestic animal" (JO, 203 ). To Sue a loveless marriage is a sort of adultery. So she confesses to Jude:

Though I like Mr. Phillotson as a friend, I don't like him - it is torture to me to live with him as a husband! . . . there is nothing wrong except my own wickedness; I suppose you'd call it - a repugnance on my part for a reason I cannot disclose - and what would not be admitted as one by the general, what tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this man whenever he wishes good as he is morally the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness ! (JO, 253).

**Rosemarie Morgan finds:**

*Sue's campaign against the Institution of Marriage is rigorous, radical and militant . . . Victorian marriage codes are an anachronism to Sue. The notion strikes her so outrageous that married woman should still be regarded as a man's property, or that sexual relationship should still require institutionalisation in a modern society pioneering in its radical quarters the dissolution of rigid role, demarcations and sexual inequality (Morgan:1988 , 111-12).*

Sue finds it a torture to live on sexually responsive term with Phillotson. She is aware of the nineteenth century sexual politics. In the eyes of the common law, married women had no identity apart from their husbands. The husband assumed legal control over his wife's person and property. Though the law was modified in 1857 in the name of Married Woman's Property Bill.

Though the Divorce Act of 1857 gave some freedom to women yet the double - standard remained. Hardy knew the true nature of marriage contract. He found that women were compelled to sell their sexuality - as a wife or as a prostitute. It is the male dominated society which exploits women sexually to further its ends. Hardy echoes contemporary socialist - feminist ideas.

Feminists by the second half of the nineteenth century agitated for social and material equalities for women. Their continued agitation for women's cause gave rise to the suffragist movement. This movement prepared the background for various reformative laws regarding women's role and position in family and society. Some feminists claimed that marriage did not necessarily have to be woman's or man's only vocation. Barbara Bodichon observed that 'It was absurd to treat women as if they existed only in and for marriage when significance of adult women did not infact live in the state (Quoted in Mendus and Rendell, 1989 229). The nineteenth century feminists, while being highly critical of the way in which the relatives of family treated women, tended to argue for elements of its internal reconstruction rather than either its transformation or its abolition. In The Subjection of Women Mill declared that wife is 'the bond servant' of her husband. She becomes his slave, except that by contrast with her slaves, no amount of ill - usage without adultery superadded, will free her from her tormentor" (quoted in Mendus and Rendell, 1989: 172). Josephine Butler bitterly opposed the contagious Diseases Act in 1860. She along with other feminists attacked the double - standard of the Act, which punished prostitutes but at the same time protected men by legitimizing their sexual offences. Feminists pointed out that the double - standard of this Act is the cause of sexual exploitation of women. Gail Cunningham informs:

Reformation laws in 19th century England regarded the position of women and the endeavour of the feminists in the late eighties and nineties for a new morality new code of behaviour and sexual ethics gave birth to a new class of women - known as 'New Woman'. The 'New Woman' rejected the traditional bond of marriage and matrimony. A new frankness about sexuality was observed in their behaviour. They stressed the need for free union rather than basing man - woman relationship on the permanent contract of marriage (Cunningham: 1978,5 ).

Hardy was acquainted with some of the feminist literatures of the period. He read thoroughly Mill's 'On Liberty' and took notes from it. We can find Mill's influence on Sue. It is clear that Hardy represents Sue with her rationalist, intellectual aspirations in line with Mill's philosophy. Sue like Mill believes that as she is an emancipated individual the social customs that bind her and Phillotson should be snapped. Hardy traces Sue's rebellious perceptions against the contemporary marriage ideology. She informs Jude: "Before I married I had never thought out fully what marriage meant, even though I knew. It was idiotic of me - there is no excuse. I was old enough and I thought I was very experienced . . . . I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly" (JO,256 ). Sue's nonconforming personality finds that Victorian women submit to their husband on economic grounds rather than on real love. Social advantages and economic need force a woman to accept contract of marriage. The society imposes on the married woman a fake identity and perpetuates oppression on her. Sue struggles to attain social and sexual identity. She says: "I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Phillotson but a woman tossed about all alone, with aberrant passions and unacceptable antipathies" (JO, 247). Sue sees her marriage with Phillotson as a part of "the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the happiness to live"; because 'for a man and woman to live on intimate terms when one feels as I do is adultery in any circumstances" (JO,266).

To Sue traditional marriage contract is so oppressive that she thinks women accept sexual slavery of male. She prefers the company of men but strongly resists their attempt to bring herself under the unequal marriage contract. Her relationship with three men in the novel demonstrates her aversion to marriage contract. An Oxford undergraduate helped Sue in her scholarly pursuit and influenced her to acquire proficiency in different subjects. The young man developed a passion for her and proposed her for marriage. Sue violently rejects the student's offer. As she informs Jude:

"He asked me to live with him in London. I found he meant a different thing than what I meant. He wanted me to be his mistress. Infact, I wasn't in love with him" (JO,177). Actually Hardy depicts Sue in terms of contemporary discourse on female liberation. Sometimes Sue's personality reflects the inherent contradiction of the suffragist movement. On the one hand she rigorously controls her sexuality and on the other she surrenders to Jude's sexuality. This contradiction also in the Women's Liberation movement has been aptly noted by Rover:

The leaders of the women's emancipation movement during the second half of the nineteenth century, although they had some claim to be called 'advanced', did not deviate from the norm to the same extent as the early feminists. Indeed, in most instances their morals were impeccable and they could be looked upon as examples of Victorian rectitude. These women fought the battles for married women's property rights, education, entry to the professions and the vote with a considerable measure of success. At the beginning of the twentieth century the parliamentary vote still eluded them and some professions were still barred, but the local government vote had been won, women could become Poor Law Guardians and hold some other local offices, . . . Nevertheless, there is a difference of opinion as to the effectiveness of the policy of trying to undermine one male bastion, then another, and a belief in some quarters that more far - reaching emancipation could have been attained had a concerted effort been made to re - structure society, including its moral basis, rather than to undertake piecemeal reform (Rover:1970, 47 - 48).

These differences of opinion within the different feminist camps weakened the force of the feminist movement. Except a few emancipated women, the majority of suffragist women declined to demolish the patriarchal social structure. They would carry on their movement to get some favour from the male dominated society.

Sue's apparent sexual frigidity shows the influence of 'woman's purity' campaigners. Sue seeks a radical alternative to conventional bonds with Jude. She wants to continue her relationship with Jude as a free lover. But we find her ultimate surrender to Jude's persuasion as a traditional woman. Though she thinks : "Fewer women like marriage than you suppose, only they enter into it for the dignity it is assumed to confer, and the social advantages it

gains sometimes - a dignity and an advantage that I am quite willing to do without"(JO, 309). She displays feminist awareness of oppression or exclusion which women experience in the patriarchal society that functions according to 'iron contract' and 'Government stamp'. Sue remains fearful of conventional marriage and would prefer to continue living as they have been. She informs Jude "I have just the same dread lest an iron contract should extinguish your tenderness for me, and mine for you, as it did between our unfortunate parents" (JO,307). But her weak submission to Victorian marriage codes shows her personality as full of contradiction. Since the beginning of the novel Sue advocates for free - love propounded by some emancipated women writers of the period viz. Mrs. Pankhurst, Mrs. Oliphant, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird et al. They believed that sex and marriage are the first step towards women's slavery. They propagated the idea that women suffer by the operation of sexuality, injustice, loneliness, child - bearing and bereavement. Like the radical feminist Shulamith Firestone, Hardy believed that 'the basic class division as oppression in society is the sexual one' (quoted in Charvet :1982,124). Hardy insists on the biological fact of maternity that brings on tragical consequences to woman. Hardy expresses his view explicitly while describing Sue's companions at Manchester Normal School:

Half an hour later they all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned to the flaring gas-jets which at intervals stretched down the long dormitories, every face bearing the legend 'The Weaker' upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are. They formed a pretty, suggestive, pathetic sight, of whose pathos and beauty they were themselves unconscious, and would not discover till, amid the storms and strains of after-years, with their injustice, loneliness, child-bearing, and bereavement, their minds would revert to this experience as to something which had been allowed to slip past them insufficiently regarded (JO, 168).

So, Sue apparently seems to be sexually frigid and without any sexual drive. She deliberately withholds her sexuality from her lovers. But Hardy did not present Sue as a sexless woman. Refuting the charges of sexual frigidity against her, Sue declares: "People say I must be cold - natured, sexless on

account of it. But I won't have it! Some of the most passionately erotic poets have been the most self - contained in their loves" (JO, 179). Sue feels with her emancipated consciousness that male sexuality denies women the right to control their own bodies and it imposes on women undesired motherhood. In a letter to Edmund Gosse in 1895 Hardy defends Sue's sexuality : 'There is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy so far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious; her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding' (Collected Letters, 2:99). Rejecting D.H. Lawrence's thesis, Mary Jacobus says "Her experience as a woman which brings her from clarity to compromise, from compromise to collapse. . . because the burden has been too heavy and the bearer too frail" (Jacobus:1975,320-21). Defending Sue's sexuality, Rosemarie Morgan says : "It is not Sue who is sexually unresponsive but rather Jude whose fantasies about the sexless 'ennobled' Sue imprisons her latent passionate self and Jude who ultimately disempowers Sue by denying her a sexual reality" (Morgan : 1988, 138 - 39).

As a pioneer of new relationship, Sue strongly abhors marriage ideology that denies women to control their own bodies. Sue's sexual frigidity and reticence in her relationship with Jude is shown in the novel. She thinks that conventional marriage contract is deeply entrenched in double - standard and oppression. Like 'New Women' she believes that she cannot sexually surrender to a man whom the institution of marriage has authorized to enjoy her sexually. Hardy voices his strong resentment against society's attempt to exploit women sexually through the ideologies of marriage. She constantly appeals to Phillotson to release her. 'Why can't we agree to free each other? We made a contract, and surely we can cancel it - not legally, of course, but we can morally, especially as no new interests, in the shape of children, have arisen to be looked after. Then we might be friends, and meet without pain to either'(JO, 266). Sue justifies her action quoting J.S. Mill : "She or he who lets the world or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape like imitation" (JO, 267) She challenges the 'artificial system of things that compels her to continue relationship with Phillotson. She is aware of patriarchal structure of Victorian family. In this

family wife is assigned the role of house - keeping and tending children. She has no role in decision making and practically she is powerless in the management of family affair. Moreover, the new forces of industrialism invested all power with the male head of the family. Moreover, since her childhood Sue knows what patriarchy is. Practically she has been brought up without her father. As Rosemarie Morgan observes: "All we can infer from this is that if Sue fears her own sexuality this probably originated in her infancy in being taught to hate her mother and in identifying with the father who both hates the mother and rejects the mother's daughter" (Morgan: 1988, 128).

Sue's bitter experience of male dominated family structure makes her apprehensive of punitive measure that the society may inflict on her. She is looked upon as an erring wife and 'the only course that can possibly be regarded as right and proper and honourable in him is to refuse it, and put her virtuously under lock and key' (JO, 275). Mr. Gillingham, a friend of Mr. Phillotson, expresses his apprehension of Phillotson and suggests that single parenthood may be preferable to traditional nuclear family. Phillotson says "I don't see why the women and the children should not be the unit without the man" (JO 277).

Unlike other Hardy's novels this novel exposes the state apparatuses come to suppress the individual liberty that goes against the conventional values of the society. The anti - establishment feelings of Sue face miseries. "The school Managing Committee requested him to tender resignation on account of his scandalous conduct in giving his wife liberty, or, as they called it, condoning her adultery. The Managing Committee thought that the "private eccentricities of a teacher came quite within their sphere of control as it touched the morals of those he taught Phillotson replied that he did not see how an act of natural charity could injure morals"(JO, 295-96). Hardy narrates how a scuffle breaks out for Phillotson's liberal attitude to Sue. The persons who took part in the scuffle comprises:

a curious and interesting group of itinerants who frequented the numerous fairs and markets held up and down Wessex during the summer and autumn months. Although Phillotson had never spoken to one of these gentlemen they now nobly led the forlorn hope in his hope . . . . This generous phalanx of supporters, and few others of independent judgement, whose own domestic experiences had been not without vicissitude, came up and warmly shook hands with Phillotson; after which they expressed their thoughts so strongly to the meeting that the issue was joined, the result being a general scuffle (JO,296).

Hardy is critical of marriage throughout the novel. His cynical mood about matrimony is evident in his representation of the way in which marriage and divorce occurs in the novel. Hardy shows how marriage cannot be dissolved even when it turns oppressive. Even the state apparatuses come forward in perpetuating the oppression of women. In the 'Shaston' section of the novel, Hardy stresses the natural marriage as opposed to the artificial marriage. Here we find both Sue and Jude are freed from their respective partners. Though Mr. Phillotson is shown with some liberal outlook on matrimony, at the end of the novel he reverts to his old patriarchal outlook on matrimony. Even we find Jude who is apparently free from conventional notion of man - woman relationship cannot free himself from the codes of masculinity. His ways of thinking, his ways of behaviour manifest his patriarchal ideology at every moment. He needs Sue to fulfil his dream. Even before he sees Sue she appears before him as a halo of inspiration. To him Sue is nothing but a means of self - fulfillment. Actually his coming to Christminster is prompted by Sue's presence there. Jude with his masculine ideology wants to possess Sue like his property. We find Sue's desire to maintain her celibate condition suppressed under Jude's paramount masculine desire. As Elizabeth Langland observes:

Jude's determination to fulfill a "man's" obligations to Arabella exerts a sexual coercion on Sue, who precipitously agrees to sleep with Jude to erase Arabella's claims on him. When Sue capitulates, Jude transfers to his sexual allegiance and chivalric code. Arabella is no longer "a woman" but her clever self "You haven't the least idea how Arabella is able to shift for herself". (5. 2. 322) The sexual possession of Sue marks a crux in the novel and in Jude's self - construction. It permits him to

define his male "nature" as one given to sensual indulgence - wine, women and blasphemy" (Langland in Higonet, 1993, 41).

On Jude's insistence to solemnize their marriage conventionally, Sue expresses her deep cynicism about marriage contract. She emphatically tells Jude : "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 - ugh, how horrible and sordid" (JO, 308). She is afraid because Jude wanted her to be a conventional wife. Sue thinks that 'women in general dislike marriage but majority of women are forced to accept marriage on the ground of economic consideration. She conveys to Jude "but I think I would much rather go on living as always as lovers, as we are living now" (JO, 307). Sue predicts, "If the marriage ceremony consisted in an oath and signed contract between the parties to cease loving from that day forward, in consideration of personal possession being given and to avoid each other's society as possible in public, there would be more loving couples than there are now" (JO, 308). To Jude Sue's deep aversion to marriage is incomprehensible. He misinterprets Sue's radical vision of man - woman relationship. He thinks that Sue is sexless and "a phantasmal bodiless creature, one who . . . has so little animal passion" (JO, 308-09). Sue's attempt at finding a radical alternative receives a serious blow when she surrenders to Jude's sexuality. She thus makes herself financially dependent on him. Emotionally blackmailed by Jude, Sue ultimately confesses to him: "I am not a cold - natured, sexless creature, am I, for keeping you at such a distance? I am sure you don't think so! Wait and see! I do belong to you, don't I? I give in!" (JO, 317). Sue's sexual surrender to Jude has aptly observed by Mary Jacobus:

The blend of pleasure and regret which we feel in her defeat is beautifully caught in the kisses she exchanges with Jude the following day - kisses, Hardy tells us, returned by Sue in a way she had never done before. "Times had decidedly changed. The little bird is caught at last! she said, a sadness showing in her smile. "(P. 322) Jude's reply ("No - only nested) consoles both her and us; but this time our sympathy is with her (Jacobus: 1975, 315).

Jude's sexual ambiguity in respect of Sue is exposed by Hardy. We find in the 'At Aldbrickham and Elsewhere' section of the novel two re - marriages: one is between Sue and Jude and the other Arabella - Cartlett marriage. Unlike Sue, Arabella firmly refuses to yield to the codes of conventional marriage. She openly flouts the prescribed roles of idealized womanhood. Hardy has shown her in different roles in the novel. Arabella's vibrant sexuality is shown in contrast to Sue's sexual repression. Rejecting the tragical consequences of sexuality, Arabella dominates the patriarchal society. Disregarding the codes of marriage she rejects one life partner after another. She even rejects the burden of motherhood. Hardy ironically supports her virile role and at last she triumphs over the oppressive masculinist society. But in case of Sue we find she declines from her radical image to a self - despising, guilt - ridden traditional womanhood. Sue is destroyed by her sexuality. Her radical thinking on marriage ends in her physical submission to Phillotson. On Jude's insistence Sue agrees to solemnize their marriage in Superintendent Registrar Office. The narrator informs.

As she read the four square undertaking, never before seen by her, into which her own and Jude's names were inserted, and by which that very volatile essence, their love for each other, was supposed to be made permanent, her face seemed to grow pain fully apprehensive. 'Names and Surnames of the Parties'-(they were to be parties now, not lovers, she thought,) 'Condition'-(a horrid idea)-Rank or Occupation'-Age'-Dwelling at'. . . District and County in which the Parties respectively dwell (JO,334).

The four - squared undertaking' resonates with the sense of bonded relationship. Sue finds to her horror that the official jargon emphasises power - structured relations between man and woman. Sue cynically observes: "It spoils the sentiment, doesn't it! . . . It seems making a more sordid business of it even than signing the contract in the vestry" (ibid). To heighten the satirical aspect of the institution of marriage Hardy describes marriage between a soldier and a woman:

The soldier was sullen and reluctant: the bride sad and timid; she was soon, obviously to become a mother, and she had a black eye. Their little business was soon done, and twain and their friends struggled out, one of the witnesses saying casually to Jude and Sue in passing as if he had known them before: 'See the couple just come in? Ha, ha! That fellow is just out of gaol this morning. She met him at the gaol gates, and brought him straight here. She is paying for everything (JO, 338).

Hardy exposes the terrible aspect of church marriage. The religious codes reinforces the sub - ordination of women" The scene at the church did not encourage Sue and Jude for matrimonial union. Coming to a church Sue could see the flowers tremble in the bride's hand, even at the distance, and could hear her mechanical murmur of words whose meaning her brain seemed to gather not at all under the pressure of her self - consciousness"(JO, 340). To Sue there are no basic differences between a secular office and a religious institution. Both these institutions neglect the basic human instinct-love. Under the surface of religious rites or Govt. Stamp, conjugal love is distorted. She thinks they "are a little before hand, that's all" (JO, 341). Coming out of church she tells Jude, "We are a weak, tremulous pair, Jude, and what others may feel confident in I feel doubts of - my being proof against the sordid conditions of a business contract again!" (JO,340). Hardy narrates Sue's feelings of oppression in religious and secular marriage offices. Moreover, we find social conventions force her to renounce her identity as a woman Gradually Sue finds that her concept of marriage is too advanced to be accepted by the traditional society. The society brings on Sue and Jude alienation and poverty. As Penny Boumelha observes,

Their own relationship, however they perceive as refined and singled out, its sexuality as merely the symbol of its spirituality. But, in the course of the novel, they are forced to recognize that their relationship is not transcendent of time, place and material circumstances, as they have tried to make it; their Romantic delusions give way leaving Jude cynical, but in Sue's case it leading on into the ideology of legalised and sacramental marriage that her experiences have led her to respect ( Boumelha: 1982, 149-50).

Sue augments family income by selling Christminster cakes. The society at Aldbrickham begin to shun them as if they have committed a crime.

Jude is denied any architectural job. As the narrator informs, "Sue who had previously been called Mrs. Bridehead, now openly adopted the name of Mrs. Fawley. Her dull, cowed, and listless manner for days seemed to substantiate all this" (JO, 354-55). Hardy sadly notes the breaking down of Sue's radical spirit by the conventional forces of the society. Jude and Sue's open and mutual affection for each other raises suspicion in the minds of the conventional people about their legal position. To focus on their 'mutual understanding' and 'return to Greek Joyousness" Hardy shows Sue and Jude at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show. Here Hardy contrasts 'the average husband and wife with Sue and Jude who have not legally solemnized their marriage. Filled with joy and wonder they visit one tent after another. Hardy informs: "In the mean time the more exceptional couple and the boy lingered in the pavilion of flowers - an enchanted palace to their appreciative taste - Sue's usually pale cheeks reflecting the pink of the tinted roses at which she gazed. For the gay sights, the air, the music, and the excitement of a day's outing with Jude, had quickened her blood and her eyes sparkle with vivacity"(JO,352 ). Hardy captures a rare moment of Sue's sexual arousal. Here Sue is "a pagan" and "natural" as she remains outside the morality of Christian civilization. Her rejection of Christian spirit in favour of 'Greek Joyousness' brings her close to Arabella. But Jude's idealized vision of Sue never regards her as a woman of flesh and blood reality. Even on the day of her sharing bed with Jude she is idolized : "All that's best and noblest in me loves you and your freedom from everything that's gross has elevated me, and enabled me to do what I should never have dreamt myself capable of"(JO, 316). This spiritualized image of Sue forces her for sexual repression.

In fact Sue and Arabella present Jude's contradictory perception of women. Hardy through Jude criticises Victorian conceptual biturcation of woman - Madonna and Whore. One fit for love and the other for sex. Arabella is described by Hardy as a female with sexual vitality. He says: "She . . . was a fine dark eyed girl, not exactly handsome, but capable of passing as such at a little distance, despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of Cochin hen's egg" (JO, 42). As D. H. Lawrence finds "Arabella the female in

her, reckless and unconstrained was strong enough to draw [Jude] after her, as her male, right to the end. Which other woman could have done this? At least let acknowledgment be made to her great female force of character' (Lawrence in Steele: 1985, 106). Surging sexual vigorousness of Arabella initiates Jude into sexual experience. Arabella's daring sexuality is exposed by Hardy when Jude walking along suddenly feels "something smacks him sharply in the ear" (JO, 41). On examining the substance Jude finds it is "a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow - pig" (JO, 41). Jude perceives in Arabella "The unvoiced call of a woman to man, which was uttered very distinctly by Arabella's personality" (JO, 44). Jude 'was lost to all conditions of things in the advent of a fresh and wild pleasure, that of having found a new channel for emotional interest' (JO, 46). When Arabella returns from Australia we find Jude's attraction for Arabella remains unchanged. For the second time Arabella meets Sue and Jude at the Great Wessex Agricultural Fair. She contemplates to win back Jude again. "He's more mine than hers!" She burst out. "What right she has to him, I should like to know! I'd take him from her if I could!" (JO, 376). At the end of the novel we find Arabella wins back Jude to her. Sexual vitality that characterizes Arabella's personality is markedly absent in Sue. Flouting all the norms of decency, she challenges the patriarchal construction of femininity. She is not a docile, submissive woman circumscribed by the roles of domestic duties. Her self-delighting and self-fulfilling sexuality approximates her to Hardy's strong women. She uses her sexuality to get liberation from the male-dominated society and in case of Sue sexuality brings her tragic consequences.

Sue had two children and is expecting one again. Moreover, the arrival of Arabella's son Father Time burdens Sue with the additional duties and responsibilities of a mother. Sue's victimisation is far more tragic than Jude because of her biological constitution. Weeping bitterly he tells Sue: "No room for us, and father a-forced to go away, and we turned out tomorrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon!... 'Tis done o' purpose!-'it's-it's!" (JO 399) Sue cannot explain to Little Father Time her failure to check repeated pregnancies. As Richard Dellamora observes:

... the emotional, physical and economic strains brought on by the repeated onset of pregnancy for Sue underscore ways in which bodily processes undermine her well-being. Her inability to control the most intimate bodily functions provides ample impetus for the body hatred that she exhibits late in the novel. Moreover, her cruel predicament makes male desire yet more problematic since it is synonymous for her with the experience of powerlessness' (Dellamora in Boumelha :2000,160).

Father Time identifying himself with 'the universal wish 'not to live' and recognising the fact that they are the source of all their parents problems, takes upon himself to 'free' them from the constraints of parenthood : 'Done because we are too many'(JO, 401).

The suicide of children brought for Sue her physical and mental breakdown. The conventional values triumph over her radical perceptions. As Penny Boumelha observes : "Sue's breakdown is not the sign of some gender determined constitutional weakness of mind, or will, but a result of the fact that certain social forces press harder on women in sexual and marital relationship largely by virtue of the implication of their sexuality in child bearing" (Boumelha, 1982). Hardy demonstrates that marriage brings only pain and anxiety to women. Sue's rebellious spirit is broken by the pressure of social convention and motherhood. As Kristin Brady observes:

In the scenes in which Sue is portrayed as a mother, her relationship with Jude seems without serious tension, and the two of them continually address each other in terms that suggest sexual closeness. Biological motherhood, it seems, has at least partially repressed the New Woman in Sue, imposing on her the conventional role of the wife whose body and desire belong to her husband. She appears to exemplify the fact that in the nineteenth century, as Mary Poovey observed 'Women's definitive character' was her 'maternal instinct '(Brady in Higonnet, 1999; 99).

Sue's gradual regression to orthodox christianity has been keenly observed by Hardy. Sue surrenders to 'the grossest form of subjection', saying "We should mortify flesh - the terrible flesh - the curse of Adam!" (JO 416) She thinks that the death of her children is a divine punishment for breaking the sacred vows of marriage with Phillotson. Sue internalizes religious punishment. She sees now that 'self - abnegation is the higher road"

(JO,412). She declares: "I wish my every fearless word and thought could be rooted out of my history, self - renunciation - that's everything!" (JO, 413). Sue's struggle against the religious and social codes proves an utter failure. MaryJacobus says: 'The birdlike, white - clothed figure at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show becomes a heap of black garments sobbing and abasing herself beneath the cross in the Church of St. Silas of Ceremonies. Arnold's Christminster, for all its sweetness and light, gives Jude only his bitter sense of exclusion: Newman's Christminster - its Victorian complement - gives Sue her sense of guilt' (Jacobus, 1975, 320). Sue thinks that Phillotson is his legal husband and their bond is divine, indivisible she emphatically declares: "But I have made up my mind that I am not your wife! I belong to him - I sacramentally joined myself to him for life. Nothing can alter it" (JO, 419). Jude reacts to her mental volte face with anger and cynicism. Sue asserts: "I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this" (JO, 418 - 19). Hardy exposes that conventional religion reinforces the Victorian ideology of marriage. Jude tells Sue: "But surely we are man and wife, if ever two people were in this world? Nature's own marriage it is, unquestionably!" (JO, 419-20). Her final regression takes a religious mode when she declares: "But not Heavens. And this was made for me there, and ratified eternally in the church at Melchester" (JO, 420). Sue is transformed into an enigma. Jude accuses Sue for her submission to the institution of marriage. His accusation raises question about the nature of woman: "What I can't understand in you is your extraordinary blindness to your own logic. Is it peculiar to you or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all or a fraction always wanting its integer?" (JO, 420). Rosemarie Morgan notes: "Step by step, she regresses to total dependence upon Phillotson, the 'punitive' father figure, to beg forgiveness, punishment, pity"(Morgan: 1988 , 131).We find Phillotson's progressive ideas on single parenthood do not last. When Sue returns to him he says: "their half - marriage should be completed." Phillotson drops his liberal ideas. Earlier Hardy demonstrates Sue's rending of night - gown and burning it. She thinks that her night - gown 'Is adulterous! It signifies what I don't feel! I bought it long ago - to please Jude. It must be destroyed" (JO, 437). Through a small visual detail Hardy narrates Sue's suffering on the morning of her re - marriage with Phillotson: "She had never

in her life looked so much like the lily her name connoted as she did in that pallid morning light. Chastened, world - weary, remorseful the strain on her nerves had preyed upon her flesh and bones, and she appeared smaller in outline than she had formerly done, though Sue had not been a large woman in her days of rudest health" (JO, 441). Being defeated by the patriarchal codes Sue is broken in mind and spirit. The image of Sue screwing herself up to a point of utter suppression in order to have sex with Phillotson is very touching. Sue says: "It is my duty o! I will drink my cup to the dregs" (JO 473). Phillotson prepares to lift her into his bedroom. Hardy informs "He led her through the doorway, and lifting her body kissed her. A quick look of aversion passed over her face, but clenching her teeth she uttered no cry" (JO,476-77). Through Mrs. Edlin a deep cynicism about Sue's second marriage is voiced by Hardy: "Ah ! Poor soul Wedding be funeral 'a b'lieve nowadays"! (JO, 477) Mary Jacobus notes: "Sex with love has brought only the death of her children; sex without love now brings the death of her deepest self"(Jacobus: 1975, 5 ). Even Jude's passionate appeal to return to him can not move her. Jude says we are acting by the letter; and "the letter killeth !" (JO, 465). Sally Ledger observes : "the legalities of marriage almost literally kill Jude, who ceases to preserve himself from ill - health after Sue's re - marriage; and Sue's defilement, her miserable life with Phillotson as 'a staid worn woman' (P. 490) constitutes a spiritual, moral and sexual death" (Ledger:1997, 187) .

Hardy informs that Sue is still passionately in love with Jude. But she suppresses her natural feeling for him. Seeing Jude her love comes gushing out: "Kiss me, o kiss me lots of times, and I am not a coward and a contemptible humbug . . . I must tell you - O I must - my darling love! It has been - only a church marriage - an apparent marriage I mean!" (JO477). Afterwards she confesses to widow Edlin : "I find I still love him - O, grossly" (JO472, ) To quote T. R. Wright : "Sue's horrifying transformation of sexual relations with her husband into a form of penance, shuddering and clenching her teeth as she does her duty(415-17). Underlines the failure of her attempted rebellion"(Wright:1989,130 ).After the death of Jude, widow Edlin informs Arabella about Sue: "Tired and miserable poor heart. Years and years older than when you saw her last. Quite a staid worn woman now. Tis the

man;she can't stomach un, even now" ! (JO, 489) Arabella tells Mrs. Edlin : "She's never found peace since she left his arms and never will again till she's as he is now"(JO, 494)

Throughout the novel Hardy narrates tragic failure of an intellectual, emancipated woman to find a radical alternative to man - woman relationships. The Victorian code of marriage and sexuality destroys the spirit of Sue. Her gradual regression from 'challenging articulacy to docile conformity' has been focused by Hardy. Sue remains trapped by the Victorian ideology of marriage as well as by her womanliness. . Social conventions impose on Sue certain codes that bring on submission to conventionality. This conflict between society and individual is the basic theme of all Hardy's novels. As Anne Z. Mickelson observes:

*Society completely triumphs over nature in the book and the triumph of society for Hardy leads to the throttling of man / woman's natural instincts; the view of sex as shameful, of yielding to one's 'bestial nature: the concept of marriage as made in heaven and divorce a sin; the conviction that woman must be 'housed' (JO, 406) and kept under man's domination to keep her from getting into mischief" (Mickelson:1976 124).*

Hardy presents Sue Bridehead under the influence of the ' New Woman' novels of the 1890s and the contemporary feminist movement. Jane Thomas informs, 'Like the radical feminists he believed that the Liberation of Women would create a revolution in the patriarchal social structure and would dissolve the hitherto rigidly demarcated gender boundaries and undo the work of centuries of natural selection' (Jane Thomas, 1999,132).Hardy explores the issues of sexuality, marriage and free love that poses a challenge to the freedom of women. Hardy believes that a new sexual morality is needed in the society to give more power to women. He voices radical feminist's demands for abolition of marriage in its current institutionalized form. Sue rejects conventional values of religion that gives more importance to conventionality than to real love. For this rebellious perceptions Sue emerges towards a new identity in the context of contemporary 'Women Question'. However, Sue's radical ideas on gender relationship are too advanced for her

age and she is brought to conformity. 'Despite her tragic defeat to the altar of conventionality, her efforts remain successful in initiating the process of re-structuring man - woman relationship. Sue provides to the feminists 'a personification of their ideal' (Fernando, 142) She may be considered a pioneer of the radical feminists of the 1920s. Sue is no doubt a major step forward in the feminist movement.