

CHAPTER - IV

CONCLUSION

The theme of love in Hardy's writings is dominant and worth considering. Love is the dominating motive in Hardy's stories-love conceived as a blind, irresistible storm. It is by means of his emotional intensity that he is able to bring home its power. No one describes love more impressively than Hardy. But he does not analyse its workings like Proust, or show like Jane Austen how it manifests itself differently in different characters. He is concerned less with lovers than with love. He wishes to make us feel the actual heat and colour of its flame, to reproduce its impact on the heart. It is the approach of the lyric poet. Hardy's picture of love is in the lyrical manner.

Love is the central theme of Hardy's novels. With the emphasis on love goes on emphasis on the part played by women in the human drama. To Hardy, love was women's whole existence. He took what is called the old-fashioned view of women. He stresses their frailty, their sweetness, their submissiveness, their coquetry, their caprice. Except Arabella in 'Jude the Obscure' Hardy treats women with sympathy. The sufferings of Tess, OF Elfride, of Marty, of Bathsheba, are touched with a peculiar pathos. Fate, often employs a human instrument to bring about the tragedies which overtake Hardy's heroines. Tess, Bathsheba, Thomasin, and Grace are the victims of the men with who they fall in love. Angel and Swithin and Knight inflict undeserved suffering on the women they love because of

a harsh idealism that freezes the flow of natural compassion.

Hardy's novels deal with social problems such as marriage, sex, motherhood, love, chastity, etc. According to Hardy, all miseries in life issue from certain maladjustment in social life, in which maladjustment in marriage plays a vital role. His last two novels 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' and 'Jude the Obscure', deal in details with the problem of marriage. Hardy regards marriage not as a means of sexual satisfaction, but a step towards a higher kind of life. Therefore, hasty marriages are not desirable. Marriages should take place after taking into account all things. Marriage based on 'love at first sight' is seldom successful. His view on marriage is well illustrated in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', in which Henchard feels that by marrying Susan he has committed a great mistake. For this reason, he offers his wife for sale. Henchard says, "I married at eighteen, like a fool that, I was; and this is the consequence of it."¹ Hardy himself was unhappy in his married life. Outwardly Hardy seemed to live a tranquil and successful life. But there was unrest beneath the peaceful surface. His personal life was over-shadowed by what at last became his wife's virtual insanity. In her later years, she became a victim of delusions, among them the conviction that she had married much beneath her parental status, and that she herself had actually written and suggested much about it. Her public behaviour towards Hardy became insulting. Hardy was modest enough, but he had his pride. His wife even tried to stop the publication of 'Jude the Obscure', which she thought to be

immoral. Hardy did not repent of his marriage and did not try to get rid of his wife, but the scars are to be seen in his work. Mrs. Hardy died, unexpectedly, in 1912. Though Hardy was with her at the time of her death, she never regained consciousness after a quarrel which had occurred earlier. A feeling of remorse and grief led Hardy to write some of most moving love-poems of any period, recapturing those moods of joy and desire which he and his wife had experienced in their first years together. These love-poems are the record of forty-two years. They run from first sight of the loved one, through courtship, to marriage, to quarrel, to staled familiarity, to disillusion, to bitterness and 'division', and finally to death, and thereafter to self-examination, remorse, expiation, and the rebirth of love. They are the lament for the past and provide a complete summary of his adult life. They explain the poet's experience of love and illuminate his life.

The poem 'When I Set Out for Lyonesse' describes the love at first sight. The journey to Cornwall On 7th March 1870 is memorable in Hardy's life. On that day he was acquainted with Emma and much impressed both of them. This poem gives us the beginning of Hardy's love-affair with Miss. Emma.

The next group of some sixteen poems, 'The Wind's Prophecy', 'A Man Was Drawing Near to Me', 'The Discovery', 'St. Launce's Revisted', 'Green Slates', 'At Castle Boterel', 'A Dream or NO', 'A Duettiest to Her Pianoforte', 'Beeny Cliff', 'The Phantom Horse-woman', 'Places', 'The Old Gown', 'The Frozen

Greenhouse', 'At the Word Farewell', 'As' Twere To-Night', 'A Week', describe Hardy's stay in Cornwall for a week in the company of Emma. During this week they both had visited many places together. So now there had been close acquaintance between them.

The third group of fifteen poems describe Hardy's starry thoughts after his return to Dorset. His memories of that cornish spot were as bright as the star. These poems include 'Ditty', 'Lines To a Movement in Mozart's E-Flat Symphony', 'Under the Waterful', 'Where the Picnic Was', 'The Figure in the Scene', 'Why did I sketch?', 'It Never Looks Like Summer', 'Self-Unconscious', 'The Sun On the Bookcase', 'The Minute Before Meeting', 'In the Seventies', 'I Rose and Went to Rou'tor Town', 'Near Lanivet, 1872', 'The Change', 'The Place on the Map'.

The fourth of these groups describe the days in Hardy's life immediately after his marriage. These poems include 'At a Fashionable Dinner', 'We Sat at the Window', 'The Rift', 'Once at Swange', 'A Two-Year's Idyll', 'Overlooking the River Stour', 'The Musical Box', 'A January Night'.

The fifth group of these poems express Hardy's memories at 'Max Gate' the new dwelling place, constructed by Hardy himself. These poems are 'Everything Comes', 'The Tree and the Lady', 'Fetching Her', 'The Self-Unseeing'.

The sixth group describes the unhappy days of Hardy and

the quarrels between he and his wife. Hardy calls it 'Our deep division'. These include 'The Division', 'Had You Wept', 'Without, Not Within Her', 'I Look Into My Glass', 'Memory and I' and 'YOU Were the Sort that Men forget'.

The Seventh group describes the disillusionment and daggers of distress on his part. These include 'I Said to Love', 'Lost Love', 'I Thought, My heart', 'The Wound' and 'When Oats Were Reaped'.

The Eighth group describes Hardy's remorse. After the death of Emma, Max Gate was strange to Hardy. The poems are 'Read By Moonlight', 'The Last Performance', 'The Peace-Offering', 'An Upbraiding', 'Penance', 'I Look In Her Face', 'The Prophetess', 'The strange House', 'The Walk', 'Your Last Drive', and 'Best Times'.

The ninth group describes the grief of Hardy over the death of his wife. The poems are 'The Going', 'Without Ceremony', 'Days to Recollect', 'A Circular', 'Two Lips', 'The Last Time', 'A Leaving', 'Rain On a Grave', 'My Spirit Will Not Haunt The Mound', 'I Found Her Out There', 'The Riddle', 'Louie', 'The Dream is Which!', 'The Prospect', 'End of the Year 1912'.

The tenth and the last group describes 'the traces of an old fire' remained in Hardy's retentive memory for half a century. He recalls here all those happy days passed with Emma. These poems include 'Old Excursions', 'Looking At a Picture on An Anniversay', 'Joys of Memory', 'After a Journey', 'The

Haunter', 'The West-Of-Wessex Girl', 'The Marble - Streeted Town', 'The Spell of the Rose', 'Paths of Former Time', 'This Summer And Last', 'A Forgotten Miniature', 'On a Discovered Curl of Hair', 'A Death Day Recalled', 'A Night in November', 'At the Piano', 'On the Doorstep', 'A Woman Driving', 'The Shadow on the Stone', 'The Marble Tablet', 'The Monument Maker', 'Her - Haunting - Ground', 'He Prefers Her Earthly', 'Of You Had known', 'The Seven Times', 'Ten Years' Since', and 'She Opened the Door'.

'This autobiographical inclusiveness on Hardy's part is not necessarily a poetical virtue. One does not measure the quality of poetry by the number of years over which the poems are spread. But what justify us in making high claims for Hardy's love poems is the intensity, the originality, the tenderness, the poignancy, the delicacy, the wistfulness-in short, the emotional range- that they exhibit.'² Elizabeth Barret Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' and Shakespeare's 'Sonnets' are the best love poems in English. We may place Hardy's love-poems next to Shakespeare and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Even in some respects Hardy's love-poetry deserve to be ranked first. Thomas Hardy attempted a number of things that neither Mrs. Browning nor Shakespeare attempted. In Mrs. Browning's sonnets, there is a unity, concentrated and harmonious singleness of purpose, and an intensity of effect that distinguish her poems from all other love poems in English. Shakespeare's, by contrast, are dispersed and

discursive. They lack unity. Their composition is spread over a longer period in the poet's life and the sonnets are not addressed to a single individual. Some of them are little more than rhetorical exercises, full of puns and verbal tricks. On the other hand Hardy's love-poems are not rhetorical exercises. They record actual experiences of the poet, but experiences of far greater extent and variety than those recorded by Shakespeare or Mrs. Browning. Hardy's poems are not all alike. They are not homogeneous. They are not merely the record of a honeymoon in a poet's life. They are life itself; they cover all of life and cover it with clarity and poetic charm. They are the record of his Cornish romance.

The emotional range and variety of Hardy's love-poems are reflected in a paralleling profusion of metres and stanzaic forms. The metres harmonize with the emotions. Whereas Shakespeare's and Mrs. Browning's poems have not such a variety. They are all in sonnet-form. Hardy's are not only not all alike but have variety of the moods, charm and delicacy. There are long lines and short lines, there are iambic rhythms and dactylic and anapestic rhythms. There are ballad stanzas and simple lyrics. There are narratives and laments; monosyllabic lines are contrasted with polysyllabic.

From Hardy's collected poems we come to know that Hardy went to school to Shelley and Browning, to Swinburne and Shakespeare, and that he knew Wordsworth and Keats, Poe and Walt Whitman. But all these love poems are the direct product

of his own experience. They justify the high claim made for them 'for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh'. Hardy resembles Wordsworth in some respects. 'To view everyday experience from an unusual angle and give the unexpected insight this was Hardy's aim as it was Wordsworth's. They are both poets of normality. But they both understand that normality is not the simple thing it was once supposed. Another resemblance between Hardy and Wordsworth is that they both had the same knack of slipping in and out of autobiography. The rush of poems that flowed out of his grief at the death of his first wife in 1912 - are of this type.'³

Many well-known and reputed critics have praised Hardy's love-poems. Harold Child (1916) says, "Perhaps the pleasantest, the most musically and suggestively beautiful poems that Hardy ever wrote are the 'Poems of 1912-13' in 'Satires of Circumstance'. They are intimate, they are personal, they are gentle; they come like a fresh breeze on the fall of a summer evening.'⁴ Another critic of his love poetry, J.Middleton Murry(1919) says, "It was fitting, then, and to some senses inevitable, that Mr.Hardy should have crowned his work as a poet in his old age by a series of love poems that are unique for power and passion in even the English language."⁵ He says further that this late and wonderful flowering has no tinge of miracle, it has sprung straight from the main stem of Mr.Hardy's poetic growth. R.W.King (1925) says, "Hardy's Love lyrics probably the largest group, and certainly including the majority of his finest and most carefully elaborated poems. To

say that on the whole Hardy expresses more profoundly the griefs than the joys of love is to utter the obvious half truth which misleads more than falsehood."⁶

I.A.Richards (1926) quotes the words of Mr.Murry to indicate Hardy's place and rank in English poetry as, "Mr.Hardy stands high above all other modern poets by the deliberate purity of his responsiveness. The contagion of the world's slow stain has not touched him : from the first he held aloof from the general conspiracy to forget in which not only those who are professional optimists take a part."⁷ Arthur S.MacDowall (1928) says,"We see Hardy best as a poet of love. Like Browning he has left us here a gallery of scenes and figures; and like Browning's it is constantly dramatic. Hardy's is less rich, if only because his full-length figures are in his novels; but his notation of moods is perhaps subtler in the poems than in the novels, and the feeling is as poignant. He is really closer here to the hearts of men and women. So one lyric after another can breathe the passion or wistfulness of love. Joy as well as suspense and disillusion has found a voice there; but what has most impressed him is the inexorable limit of things. We feel that with Hardy love can be the whole of happiness, but ever, as with Browning, that happiness might make the whole of life."⁸ He knew, too, that love has its own bitterness:

Love is long-suffering, brave,
Sweet, prompt, precious as a jewel;
But O, too, Love is cruel,
Cruel as the grave.⁹

C.Day Lewis, quotes the words of T.S.Eliot : "The Work of the late Thomas Hardy represents an interesting example of a powerful personality uncurbed by any institutional attachment or by submission to any objective beliefs; unhampered by any ideas, or even by what sometimes acts as a partial restraint upon inferior writers, the desire to please a large public."¹⁰

Dr.Lewis again says, "I believe the best of these 1912-13 poems to be some of the finest love poetry in our language indeed, one may wonder if there is in any language a parallel to this winter-flowering of a poetry of sentiment which had lain dormant in the poet's heart throughout the summer of his age."¹¹ The emotional range of the poems is remarkable, from

the agony of berevement and remorse in 'The Going' to the almost ecstatic acceptance of 'After A Journey'; from the delicate pathos of 'The Haunter', in which the dead wife is speaking, to the no less delicate melancholy, strengthened by sinewy phrasing and a few clearcut images, which makes 'At Castle Boterel' so haunting a farewell to love.¹² Dr.Lewis

further says, "Looking at these poems with a poet's calculating eye, one's first response may be, 'My Word, how everthing came off for him then!' But it did not come off just because he had fifty years' experience of using words. Beneath their grace and appealing diversity, the 1912-13 poems have good bone, formed by the sincerity, the refusal to overstate an emotion or falsify a situation, which we have noticed before."¹³

Philip Larkin says, "I'm saying that what I like about him primarily is his temperament and the way he sees life'. He's not a transcendental writer, he's not a Yeats, he's not an Eliot; his subjects are men, the life of men, time and the passing of time, love and the fading of Love."¹⁴ Not only Philip Larkin but also most of the well-known modern poets like W.H.Auden, Dylan Thomas, have loved Hardy's poems. Thom Gunn in 'The Influence of Ballad Forms' (1972) says, "I say of course because nowadays Hardy's best-known poems are probably those to do with personal loss, the poems of 1912-13 about his first wife."¹⁵ Most academic critics from Leavis to the present express doubts about the 'greatness' of Hardy's poetry. Hynes, the most searching, compromises by calling it 'a high poetic achievement'. Henry Gifford in 'Hardy In His Later Poems', says, "There is no parallel that springs to mind for Hardy's late flowering. He had entered his seventies when he wrote the poems for which he is most admired."¹⁶ Hardy is the most rewarding poet to read in English between Hopkins and Eliot. He surprises by his capacity to breathe new life into much that might have seemed repetitive. There is a kind of innocence in his highly personal idiom; his eye and ear are continually alert. The emotional range of his work is fairly narrow, but for their depth and variety of response and disciplined ease the 'poems of 1912-13' can be compared with the finest verse of this century.¹⁷

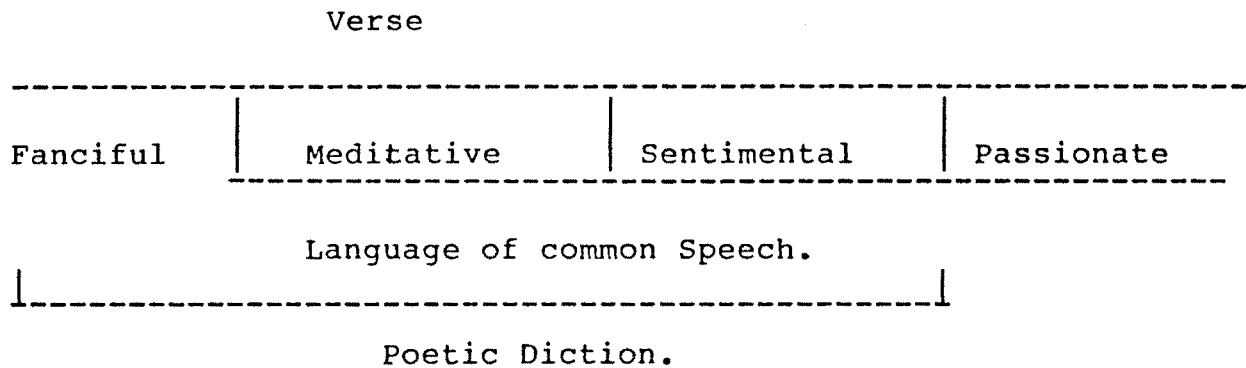
From all these high claims made about his 'poems of

1912-13' we come to know that today Hardy's greatness as a poet is accepted. His love-poems contain no self-analysis and there is not a touch of exhibitionism. They are spontaneous unselfconscious cries of the heart. Their subject-matter is directly connected with his own experience. He writes about the places he knew, about Dorchester and Weymouth and the Wessex countryside, and about incidents that had taken place there in the past and in the present. These places and incidents are described realistically and circumstantially. It is his particular blend of reality and imagination that makes his love poems so memorable. 'The Voice' is as beautiful and as musical as any other love poem in English. It has a peculiar authenticity because in it he is recalling truthfully the experiences of an individual, not a nameless figure of a lover but a specific man called Thomas Hardy. His poems bear the recognisable stamp of his personality, simple, sublime and lovable.

Rhythms of inexhaustible variety and tunefulness form delicate patterns in themselves. Rhythms are always originally part of the meaning. The sounds of words expound Hardy's subjects by their own music. Stanza forms endlessly varied and inventive are always part of the meaning they convey. The number of lines in a stanza modifies its expressiveness. Relations between lines of similar or different lengths say something. Imagery is inherent in Hardy's language. It is embedded in his words; and the way he uses them. Sometime the objects in a poem form a field of imagery. In 'The Place on the

Map', the sea, the drought, the woman's unweeping eyes combine to portray a dry situation.

We can get Hardy's own views on the language of verse from his biography. He says, "No man's poetry can be truly judged till its last line is written. What is the last line? The death of the poet And hence there is this quaint consolation to any writer of verse - that it may be imperishable for all that anybody can tell him to the contrary; and that if worthless he can never know it, unless he be a greater adept at self-criticism than poets usually are."¹⁸ Again in a pocket of 1900, there appears a diagram illustrating 'the language of verse:'¹⁹



Thereon he gives a note to illustrate his meaning.

The confusion of thought to be observed in Wordsworth's teaching in his essay in the Appendix to 'Lytical Ballads' seems to arise chiefly out of his use of the word "imagination". He should have put the matter somewhat like this :In words of 'Passion and Sentiment' (not "imagination and sentiment") the language of verse is the language of prose. In

Works of 'Fancy' (of the real kind) is proper, and even necessary. The diagram illustrates my meaning."¹⁹

Many of the best poems are almost conversational in style, and do little violence to prose syntax or to the rules of grammar. There is the precision of observation, the command of minute detail. His method was primarily dramatic, an anecdote; but often detail and vision fuse and support each other, and the poem succeeds. The language is plain and unadorned, almost colloquial; it is suitable both to the speaker and to the occasion. We respond to the poem, or we accept what it says about grief, then, because it has, its imagery, its rhythms, and its language, 'proved' to us that grief is real.

We can conclude that his love poetry is the lament for the past and an explorer of reality, Thomas Hardy has achieved general recognition as one the great English love poet. The Mr. Hardy of the love poems of 1912-13 is not a man giving way to memory in poetry; he is a great poet uttering the cry of the universe flowering a love poem after love poem when he was in his summer. These love poems illuminate his life. Many have called these love poems as 'late flowering' and 'Winter flowering' because he wrote them very late in his life.

Undoubtedly, Thomas Hardy is one the greatest English love poets. His moving, deeply personal verses tell the tragic

story of his love affair with Emma, his first wife, from its idyllic beginnings, through long years of disillusionment, to the passionate, yet futile, reawakening of Hardy's love for Emma after her death. These hauntingly beautiful poems are not only one of Hardy's finest achievements, but also rank amongst the world's greatest love poetry. Hardy died as a poet, as he died as a man, without heirs.

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