



DEPICTION OF TESS AS A SUFFERING DAUGHTER OF NATURE AND ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SYMBOLS FROM THE NOVEL– TESS OF THE D’UBERVILLES BY THOMAS HARDY

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ABSTRACT:

This article analyse about the problem of a pure women Tess, an attractive and innocent girl who tries to be a dutiful daughter, a virgin and an obedient wife whose motives are pure but later she goes to work and is seduced by Alec D’Uberville, finally she bears a child called Sorrow, who dies in childhood. From this incident Tess’s suffering begins. The novel focus on the suffering of Tess as a daughter of nature and the cruel hands of fate hangs over all the characters. Hardy defines this story as all the bad things happening to Tess. Hardy also muses that Tess sufferings are the punishments for her ancestors’ crime. Tess is a character who does not experience happiness even a single day in her life. In this novel it is the Society which prevents her from achieving the moral ideals of her life and finally she self-sacrifices herself as a long suffering women. Hardy also analyse the major themes and symbols used in this novel.

KEYWORDS:

Pure, innocent, sufferings, seduced, nature, punishments, society, themes, symbols.

INTRODUCTION:

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a novel about an attractive and young innocent girl named Tess Duberfield, whose father sends her to the rich D'Urberville family. Tess is seduced by Alec D'Urberville where she gives birth to a child called Sorrow who dies in the infancy. Later Tess goes to work as dairymaid at Talbothays dairy where she falls in love with Angel Clare, an intelligent person whom she had met in the beginning of the novel. Later they planned for their wedding where Tess is abandoned by Angel Clare, after he came to know her past. Finally Angel Clare leaves to Brazil, and later when he returns he finds that Tess has killed Alec. Tess is arrested and hanged to death.

This novel is a tragedy of both love and life. It focuses on the character Tess where Hardy presents her as an innocent girl who later turns into a tragic heroine. Throughout the novel Tess remains as a passive victim. Hardy presents Tess as a pure woman, but later the incidents turn her into a victim. Tess always sacrifices her life for her family. She didn't have her own ideas, where she always had sufferings in her life.

Thomas Hardy focuses on the social constraints on the lives of the Victorian England and their unhappiness. His novels have tragic characters and the struggles against their passions. Industrialization, class, women, religion, society were the major characteristics of Victorian age, where Hardy relates these characteristics to the characters in this novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

The major themes used in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are injustice, fate, nature, modernity, social criticism, Women, Paganism and Christianity, male dominance and sexual harassment, lure of money and knowledge and ignorance Hardy also focuses on the symbols used in this novel.

Fate plays an important role on the character Tess, where all the bad things happen to her from the beginning of the novel. She does not experience even a single happiness from beginning till the end. Tess encounters with horse, her forest encounter with Alec which results in pregnancy, later the death of her father then the eviction of her family where she cannot escape from all these fates which played on her life. Hardy finally muses that Tess's sufferings are the punishment of her ancestor's crime.

Hardy talks about the societal transition from agriculture to industries in this novel. He says how Tess changes herself to a farm woman and also leaves home to labour in fields as a mother. Hardy introduces the reaping machine as an act of modernism. He called this as “ache of modernism” that separated man from nature. Machines and upper class are the modernizing forces of industrialization.

Sexual double standard plays an important role in this novel where all the misfortunes happen to Tess based on society. Society places Tess as an unclean woman when raped by Alec, while Angel Clare as a clean man when he was engaged with the premarital affair. Angel Clare rejects Tess because of his community. The rules of society ruin Tess's life.

Hardy struggled to bring the religious beliefs through his works. Tess is the embodiment of pagan innocence. Angel describes Tess as “new spring child of nature” and he compares Tess to two mythical women Eve and Demeter. Tess is known for divinity and she plays a role of sacrificial victim throughout the novel.

Hardy brings out the Tess status as women and roles of women assumed in the society. Tess plays a role of passive victim because she was falling asleep when she was raped, when her horse was killed and finally at Stonehenge when she was arrested. Tess and other women characters are the symbol of fertility, nature, and purity. Tess also plays a role of an active agent by murdering Alec as an escape from male oppression. Finally Tess is a unique individual soul, not a symbol of fertility and oppression but also a successful and sympathetic woman.

During the 19th century, males dominated the society and they expect females to do their order. Hardy focuses on the male dominance in this novel by saying that man may stray with impurity but women may not. He also relates to the eviction of Tess and her mother after her father's death. Hardy also focuses on the sexual harassment by showing the rape of Tess by Alec from where her sufferings begin.

Thomas Hardy brings out the major symbols used in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, they are may day dance, Prince the horse, D'Urberville coach, black flag, sorrow, knife, angel, the white and red colour, water, birds, chase, Brazil etc.

May day dance is a ritual celebrated by the Victorians to show the fertility of nature and the arrival of spring, by women wearing white dress with flowers and a red ribbon on it which also symbolizes their newness and beauty.

The horse is the symbol of D'Urberville family which is the means of livelihood. When the horse dies, Tess is sent to Tantridge to meet the prince Alec which is portrayed as her fate in the novel.

This coach is the symbol of an old legend of family which also symbolizes the ancient idea that is being punished by one's ancestors.

The black flag symbolizes death. This is shown at the end of the novel as the flag raises Tess is hanged to death.

The character Angel comes to Tess life in the beginning of the novel by giving her hope and happiness like how it is related to the real Angel by giving Tess the hope in her life.

Birds are the main symbols used by Hardy in this novel as it symbolizes the progression of Tess loss of freedom. The songs of birds throughout the novel are related with the situation and sentiments in the novel. The songs are of sombre manner when the warnings are given to Tess during her rape. The cheerful songs were played during her good days of Tantridge and the happiest moments of her life. Alec mother had few blind birds which is shown similar to Tess by Hardy in this novel.

Brazil is the far-off fantasy land during the 19th century characters, but for Angel it was the unspoiled land to practice his agriculture skills. Brazil also symbolizes the relationship of Angel with Tess which finally destroys his fantasy.

This novel Hardy focus the themes and symbols to show how the society and women plays an important role with the characters. It says that women should always play a active role in the society and she should try to implement her own ideas to be successful in her life. If Tess would be an active role from the beginning of the novel she would be successful women throughout her life.

Society also plays an important role in the novel because through society men and women are treated in a different way. The male dominance is also shown through the character Angel to the women in the diary fields and the rape of Tess by Alec shows the sexual harassment. Even in today's world society treats men and women in a different way where there should be made lot of changes in this society.

We should be women of bold and courageous with own ideas, for nothing should happen to us in this society like how Tess became a victim of suffering , being a passive role throughout the novel.

CONCLUSION:

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a tragic masterpiece of Thomas Hardy, an English writer of critical realism. He focus the character Tess, an innocent women as a suffering daughter of nature through themes and symbols ,by beautifully potraying it with the incidents faced by her throughout the novel.

