

# Role of Fate and chance in The Mayor of Casterbridge(B.A. Part11 Eng Hons Paper 1V 2019-20)

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Dr. Vishnulok Bihari Srivastava

Asso. Prof. Dept. Of English

R.M. College, Sasaram, V.K.S.U.,Ara

The novels of Thomas Hardy are marked by frustration and disillusionment. The characters grapple with the circumstances which rule the roost forcing them to dance at their tune. They try their level best to set themselves free from the shackles of fate and chance but their effort to overcome the challenges posed to them by chance proves to be futile. Undoubtedly the characters of Hardy are very industrious ,diligent and hard-working. They tide over the impediments by forging out new ways displaying extra-ordinary quality of head and heart. IT appears that fate does not cause any hindrance in their way. But their joys are short- lived. Fate bounces back with redoubled vigour forcing the character to submit himself to the wishes fate. Chance plays such a predominant role that the characters are reduced to the status of puppets in the hands of fate. They remain a mute spectator and hardly raise a banner of protest against the authority of fate .They meekly succumb themselves showing no resilience to the evincing power or uncompromising will of fate which reigns supreme .Fate thwarts pleasure using his invincible power which is manifested through various ways most probably through chance or circumstances.

In the novels of Thomas Hardy man is at war with the circumstances which treat him as minor insect and is at liberty to tear him into pieces. This constant struggle between man on the one role on the course of hand and the in different faith is the characteristics of his major novels. Since faith plays an active part in the human drama, it is personified in various forms. Sometimes it appears as a natural force, yet another movement it embodies itself in the form of some innate weakness latent in his personality. In no other novel

chance plays such a conspicuous role than in *Tess of D'Urbervilles*. We witness an intense battle between man and destiny in this novel. It reflects itself in the guise of inexplicable blows and victimized Tess beyond repair.

Actually man's predicament in the universe is the theme of Hardy's novels. He has no faith in benevolent and omnipotent God of Christianity. Fate plays an important role in his tragic novels as it does in Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Oedipus, the hero of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Terence* falls prey to circumstances and commits the murder of his own father and gets married with his mother unknowingly and awards him severe punishment for accomplishing moral crime. By fate, Hardy means those powers which go well beyond the control of man. They include man's heredity, parentage and his place of birth, his socio-economic condition and his chance. Hardy's God is malignant, and vengeful. God employs Fate and Chance as two powerful whips to lash human beings with.

Hardy is of the opinion that happiness can be revived in life through love. But on certain occasions even love leads to tragic consequences. Two persons of dissimilar nature are drawn together but very soon they stand at two different poles. If Eustacia had loved Wildeve and Thomasin loved Clym the tragedy of *The Return of The Native* would have been avoided. Eustacia's tragedy results from her exclusive love for the glittering city life. But the cruel destiny intrudes her life to spoil her promising career. It is just a chance that Clym is fast asleep and Eustacia does not open the door to Mrs. Yeobright thinking that her husband would do so. It is also by chance that Clym comes to know from the real fact about his mother's death.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* fate intervenes on several times in the career of Henchard which ruins his promising career leaving him a dejected fellow. He tries his level best to overcome the threat posed to him by the circumstances but he is entangled in the net spread over by the subversive forces. He is elevated to the position of the Mayor by virtue of his exceptional courage and hard working but he fails to give a fitting reply to the circumstances and succumb to

their wishes. His relationship with his daughter Elizabeth runs in to a rough weather in the event of the content of the letter handed over to him by his deceased wife Susan in which she had revealed the real identity of Elizabeth. His relationship with Elizabeth further strained leaving him alone in the world.