

THE PROJECTION OF CAPITALISM IN THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

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Abstract:-

This paper sheds light on capitalism and its projection in the novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'. Capitalism is exposed through the main characters in the novel. It deals with various types of businesses are put forward in relation with agriculture, industrialism and machineries. 'Sale of wife' is also taken as business. Capitalism leads to consume anything which is present in the world. This paper analyzes the ill effects on the society.

Keyword:- Capitalism, Agriculture, Modernism, Machinery, Industrialism and etc.

Introduction:-

The Mayor of Casterbridge is one of the important novels of Thomas Hardy. The novel sheds light on the harsh reality of capitalism on the Victorian society. Capitalism may be illustrated with the social conditions of the people who are affected due its projection of capitalism in the novel. Bill. R.Moore. New York, USA reviewed The Mayor of Casterbridge. According to him, Hardy's work is well-known for showing modernity's ache, i.e., how technology and other advances were rapidly and drastically changing a society that had been essentially the same for a thousand years. The Mayor in particular portrays its effect on agriculture and other business aspects, depicting all with realism and human interest.¹

The Projection of Capitalism in The Mayor of Casterbridge:-

Thomas Hardy has created Henchard as a multidimensional figure; he is the Mayor of Casterbridge, with power and authority, but within the Mayor he is a hay-trusser, and the man who sold his wife at a fair. The novel gives an insight into civic life, the worthy burgesses of Casterbridge networking in their council-rooms and taverns. The animal instincts of the wife sale, the gutter-press viciousness of the locals' "skimmity-ride", and the proximity of the

countryside, where so many Victorians characters wander to survive and to lay bare their feelings, reveal the fragility of civilization and our urban constructs.

Capitalism plays a significant role in the determining the form and action of characters in which they express themselves. The Mayor of the Casterbridge begins with a scene of selling his wife that dramatizes the analysis of female subjugation and suppression as a function of capitalism. The auction of Michael Henchard's wife Susan at the fair at Weydon-Prior gives us an account of females is considered as saleable commodity. This will become clearer with following description. Michael Henchard, an unemployed hay trusser, succumbs to the siren call of alcohol at country fair. He felt that his wife, Susan, is holding him back from success in this world. He awakes to sobriety the next morning and has auctioned her and his daughter. Henchard contents:

"Will anybody buy her? Said the man...

*Nor you to mine, said he. So we are agreed about that."*²

Henchard's auctioning off his wife to the highest bidder at Weydon Fair in the first chapter verifies that in early nineteenth century England women of her class in rural districts were regarded as little more than stock to be supposed to arrange of at their owner's impulse. They are kept at home on the expectations of men. The following description exposes the treatment given to the woman in England in 19th century. She is considered as an auction able item. Thomas Hardy describes:

*"In ten minutes the man broke ... Jack Rag or Tom Straw among ye buy my goods [Susan]?"*³

This affirms that such sales were not exceptional in England in the 19th century. The firmity woman has given less important because of her low economic status. She has to work as pawn. She works various jobs there on very low wages. This exposes that the inferior has given low wages. Their financial condition becomes more severe due to the work and inappropriate money or salary. Capitalism is overtly exposed through the businesses such as the real auction of an inferior animals, the better class of traders, village shopkeepers, the peep-shows, waxworks, inspired monsters, medical men, nick-nack vendors and etc. Henchard as a business after some while asks about her commodity is gone? He treated as commodity that can be sale at any time as he wishes.⁴

Henchard as a true business holder wants to move toward Casterbridge. He sold his wife and girl too. As a capitalist Henchard inquired that:

"A stolid look of concern filled the husband's face, as if, after all, he had not quite anticipated this ending; and some of the guests laughed.

Is she gone? He said."⁵

The sale of Susan is conducted in ready cash, but the sailor Newson insists that the sale should only happen on the understanding that the young woman is willing. This selling exposes the control of men over women. Newson put up his money at all shows to him to be involved in the liberalization of the social type of wives as commodities. Henchard realizes that Susan's meekness and ignorance has led her to acquiesce in the transaction, and does not look further than the spiked firmity for what drove him to sell her. Her submissive nature is considered that she is ready for sale as a commodity. Her sale is considered as business from capitalist point of view.

Then Hardy described the business of selling and purchasing commodities. It involves transaction of items and money. Hardy neatly described the trade of goods, services, consumers and business operation. Business deals with capitalist economies and multiple individuals are in practice. Hardy writes:

*"Although conducted in his library rather than in his business office, ...selling commodities, and knows to a penny what it will take to make a purchase.."*⁶

Hardy describes old hierarchy in favor of tolerance and acceptance. Women are affected in the society due to the dependent upon men for money and security. They have to tolerate everything due to capitalistic and business attitude of the people. Susan Henchard, Lucetta, Firmity woman, and many others are represented as reliant upon male characters in the novel. The sales of women are considered as the transaction commodity or money from ATM.

To extrapolate this statement from capitalist point of view, women were considered as status symbols, just as the right make of car is today. For many people even today, female currency remains beauty; in these terms, Susan is regarded as bankrupt, penniless, broke etc. people in Casterbridge are considered at Henchard's choice, for Susan has neither the social status, nor physical attractiveness, nor money necessary for one. Hardy described the capitalistic and business structure of 18th century in England. Susan says-

*"Mike, she said. I've lived with thee a couple of years, and had nothing but temper! Now I'm no more to 'ee; I'll try my luck elsewhere."*⁷

Above description will be interpreted in relation with capitalism and pragmatic sense that Susan had lived with him and now she is sold to Newson. In the pragmatic point of view, Susan is not affordable to Henchard so he had sold her. For the husband, the sale released him from his marital duties, including any financial responsibility for his wife.⁸ Henchard didn't afford her to keep so he sold her. But the remark made by Susan also meaningful. She

knew this business very well so she was ready to accept the decision. She became ready to go with Newson as he was rich and ready to provide anything. Though Susan seems meek and silent, businesslike outlook is present in her. She also needs financial security which Henchard are unable to give. The less popular notion of wife selling was an alternative but illegitimate method of ending a marriage.⁹ In the early part of the 19th century women often had no trades by which they could support themselves. Women were usually completely dependent upon their husbands for their sustenance. Susan realizes these things. Michael has disclaimed all responsibility toward her and her child. So Susan's choice is understandable. Every character technically closely attached with capitalism and business.

Michael Henchard is a capitalist businessman. With his audacious sale of his family, with his physical strength and aggressive energy, Henchard dominates the novel until he dies and leaves his will of the last page but one of the novels. The other main characters find their purpose and meaning in their relationships to Henchard. No other character compares with him in stature or the amount of attention he receives. He thus occupies the center of the stage very much like a figure in classical tragedy. Though Hardy had given the description of the village, capitalism works in the society in various ways. Hardy writes:

*"The village was quite still, it being that motionless hour of rustic daily life which fills the interval between the departure of the field-labourers to their work, and the rising of their wives and daughters to prepare the breakfast for their return. Hence he reached the church without observation, and the door being only latched the entered."*¹⁰

Hardy described village as silent and motionless in a rustic manner. He exposes inherent capitalism in rural part too. This is exposed through the field labourers, wives, daughters and workers. Capitalism could not be eliminated in rural part too.

Farfrae's rise of a trader in Casterbridge:-

Donald Farfrae is in many respects the complete, forgiving, practical and business approached man. He came to Casterbridge as stranger and begins to work for others. Henchard is impressed by Farfrae's the young Scot's cooperation in solving the corn problem, and his promise to bring modern knowledge to Henchard's old-fashioned business, but more significantly, also because of his resemblance to his dead younger brother:

*"Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's – now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his".*¹¹

Henchard requires Farfrae more to satisfy his social and economical needs than as an assistant or a manager. Farfrae is more than a manager, a competitor in business. Henchard dismisses Jopp, a candidate for the position for Farfrae is almost compelled to take, but also turns him and to hasten his downfall. Henchard accuses Farfrae of taking advantage of him:

*“Why did you speak to me before them like that, Farfrae? You might have stopped till we were alone. Ah- I know! I’ve told ye the secret of my life-fool that I was to do’t- and you take advantage of me!”*¹²

There is a meeting between Henchard and Farfrae at the inn called ‘The Three Mariners’. Henchard is so impressed by the Farfrae’s skill in improving wheat that he offers to employ the Scotchman as the corn-manager in his own business. He has different plans about his future. Henchard does his utmost to prevail upon Farfrae to stay on in the town and accept the post, but Farfrae remains firm in his refusal. As Henchard, ‘In my business’, ‘tis true that strength and bustle build up a firm. Farfrae’s final words to Henchard in this chapter are very remarkable in relation with capitalism and specially capitalism.

*“Very well, said Henchard quickly, ‘please yourself. But I tell you, young man, if this holds good for the bulk as it has done for the sample, you have saved my credit, stranger though you be. What shall I pay you for this knowledge?’”*¹³

There is an incident involving Abel Whittle who creates some unpleasantness between Henchard and Farfrae. The incident involves a labourer by the name of Abel Whittle who is in the service of Henchard. Henchard was so strict in business that he doesn’t like and late and unworthy people in the business. He suggests to the Abel about the habit of over – sleeping and coming late to his work Henchard contents:

*“Once more-be in time to-morrow morning. You see what’s to be done, and you hear what I say, and you know I’m not going to be trifled with any longer.”*¹⁴

Business war is shown between Farfrae and Henchard in chapter sixteen. As there is a celebration of national event, Farfrae make arrangements for a festive show in honour. Henchard too decides to put up his own show in order to excel Farfrae and to make him feel small with the help of money. Henchard spends a lot of money and makes elaborate arrangements for the entertainment of the people of Casterbridge. However, it breaks down due to unexpected rain. The following lines express Henchard’s advertisement of superiority over Farfrae with the help of capitalism. Henchard adds:

“He advertised about the town, in long posters of a pink colour, that games of all sorts would take place here; and set to work a little battalion of men under his own eye. They erected greasy-poles for climbing, with smoked harms and local cheeses at

the top. They placed hurdles in rows for jumping over; across the river they laid a slippery pole.”¹⁵

In contrast, Farfrae is a business minded man had arranged his show in a sheltered place. This scene shows the superiority of Farfrae over Henchard. Farfrae decided to set the business in the Casterbridge. A man in the corn-and-hay business wanted to sell his business, and Farfrae comes forward to buy it. Farfrae becomes an independent corn-and –hay merchant, though on a very small scale, it was is individual. Hardy writes:

“Meanwhile Donald Farfrae had opened the gates of commerce the corn and hay-trade was proportionately large, and with his native sagacity he saw opportunity for a share of it.”¹⁶

In the chapter seventeen, there is fight between Henchard and Farfrae in relation with economical and business competition. Henchard receives the news about Farfrae’s business that he feels even more offended than before. He considers Farfrae’s step as a challenge to himself. He, therefore, decides to teach a lesson. Henchard thinks not to allow Farfrae’s business to flourish.

“Didn’t I keep him here-help him to a living? Didn’t I ...at fair buying and selling, mind-at fair buying and selling! And if I ... business as well as one here and there!”¹⁷

Though capitalism is not severely exposed in the novel, it plays vital role. Henchard starts to overtake Farfrae. But Farfrae takes care to avoid any kind of business-rivalry with him. Like an intelligent businessman he refuses to have any business-dealings with those traders who have previously bear dealing with Henchard. He behaves like a perfect gentleman even though he has now started his independent business as a corn-merchant and has to compete with former employer. He avoids doing anything that would look like trade-antagonism on his part towards Henchard. This is what Farfrae says to one of the corn-dealer about Henchard:

“Well, he’s a friend of mine, and I’m a friend of his-or if we are not, what are we? ‘Od send, if I’ve not been his friend, who has, I should like to know?”¹⁸

There is a crowd gathering round a strange –looking vehicle in the street below. Many people are attracted to see the machine. There are technological innovations and an increasing capital stock in England into the work. English merchants were able to acquire wealth and power. They learn that the vehicle is a new kind of agricultural machine, a corn-drill. Hence, Henchard begins to criticize the agricultural machine and says that it is most unsuited for use here. Farfrae also informs that it was he who recommended that this machine should be obtained for use in these parts. Farfrae contents:

"It was the new-fashioned agricultural implement called a horse-drill, ... corn-market as a flying machine would create at Charing Cross." ¹⁹

Hardy describes the position of the two men with regard to business. Rivalry in chapter twenty six is due to capitalism among Farfrae and Henchard. There is severe competition in business and become rivals in business. Henchard nominated Jopp as his employer. This man was previously applied for the post of a corn-manager but Henchard had on that occasion offered the post of Farfrae. Jopp, being unemployed at this time, readily accepts the job offered by Henchard. His purpose is to make use of Jopp's services in order to crush Farfrae's business. Henchard contends:

"Now, said Henchard, digging his strong eyes into Jopp's face, one thing is necessary to me, as the biggest corn-and-hay-dealer in these parts. The Scotchman, who's taking the town trade so bold into his hands, must be cut out. D'ye hear? We two can't live side by side-that's clear and certain." ²⁰

This shows clearly competition in business. Henchard wants to use only fair means in crushing his rival and he makes it clear to Jopp that no unfair means are to be used. Henchard makes up his mind to destroy Farfrae's business, but it happens exactly reverse. Henchard business is ruined due to miscalculation. He dismisses his corn-manager, Jopp. He speaks following words in disgust:

"You can wipe and wipe, and say, 'A fine hot day', can ye!" cried Henchard in a savage*a fine day enough! Why did ye let me go on, hey?* ²¹

Henchard as a bankrupt businessman:-

The novel opens with a detailed description of Michael and his wife, Susan walking along the road looking for work. After the sale of Susan, Henchard became a corn-merchant. He rises from a mere journeyman hay-trusser to become the richest and most influential man in Casterbridge. Henchard is a man of extremes. Henchard was a resentful, superstitious and depressed person due to the impression of economic condition. It led to him undergo in business. He has suffered in the loss of business. Due to the loss of business, he lost name and fame in the city. Now he begins rapidly to fall in public esteem. His financial position has become so critical that he is compelled to declare his bankruptcy. His corn-stores, hay-barns, his house, and his furniture are all sold by auction, and it is so happens that all his property and belongings are purchased by Farfrae. Farfrae has dominated to Henchard in all the fields of business. Henchard gives away even his gold pocket-watch, and the little money that he is carrying in his purse, to his creditors. Without home, Henchard retires to the

humble quarters of Jopp, his assistant. Henchard had dismissed him after suffering losses in his business. In opposite Farfrae has now become as prosperous and wealthy citizen of Casterbridge. Henchard states-

*“‘Gentlemen,’ he said, ‘over and above the assets that we’ve been talking such as was carried by all farmers and dealers-untying it, and shaking the money out upon the table beside the watch.’”*²²

Farfrae become more dominant to Henchard and he even bought the house of him. He bought his furniture too. But he persuades to Henchard to stay on in Casterbridge and offers to accommodate him in the house which once belonged to him. Jopp adds:

*“Jopp continued: And you heard of that fellow who ...as he’d already got the lease.”*²³

After big loss, ‘Henchard finds no way of earning his livelihood except by working as a labourer in the pay of Farfrae like so many other laborers’. Henchard contents:

*“Here be I, his former master, working for him as man, and he the man standing as master, with my house and my furniture and my what-you-may-call wife all his own.”*²⁴

After losing power, money, and status Henchard sees no course open to him but to quit. He departs from Casterbridge and tries to find a job as a hay-trusser. He leaves the town just as he had come unemployed and almost penniless.

*“During the day he had bought a new tool-basket, cleaned up his old hay-knife and wimble, set himself up in fresh leggings, knee naps and corduroys, and in other ways gone back to the working clothes of his young manhood, discarding forever the shabby-genteel suit of cloth and rusty silk hat that since his decline had characterized him in the Casterbridge street as a man who had seen better days.”*²⁵

At the end of novel, there is a wedding ceremony on Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard buys a caged goldfinch as a wedding-present for her because he can afford nothing better.

*“What should that present be? He walked up and down the street, regarding dubiously the display in the shop windows, from a gloomy sense that what he might most like to give her would be beyond his miserable pocket. At length caged goldfinch met his eye.”*²⁶

Hardy, as a writer very predominantly depicted the economical status of the characters. He had some specific ideas about business, capitalism and money. Henchard accepts the job of a hay-trusser after having left Casterbridge. As in the chapter forty-four, he exposes capitalism with the help of following lines.

“At length he obtained employment at his own occupation of hay-trusser, work of that sort being in demand at this autumn time. The scene of his hiring was a pastoral farm near the old western highway, whose course was the channel of all such communication as passed between the busy centres of novelty and the remote Wessex boroughs.”²⁷

Capitalism and symbolic significance of the agricultural machine:-

Hardy's description of the threshing-machine illustrates his view that the encroachment of industrialism upon rural life. This description is censorious rather than commendatory. He describes widespread introduction of the threshing machine and the policy of enclosing fields. The agricultural machine which is introduced by Farfrae into Casterbridge has also a symbolic significance. It has created the disparity and clash between Henchard and Farfrae. To Lucetta, this machine is a kind of agricultural piano; to Henchard, it is a stupid new-fangled device; to a man of the future like Farfrae, it is an economic necessity. This new drilling-machine accentuates in a symbolic manner the conflict between the old order and the new order, a conflict which is dramatized in Henchard and Farfrae.

The agricultural imagery pervades through the novel reinforces in a symbolic manner the contrast between the civilized and the natural. The wholesome firmity is corrupted with rum in the first chapter; and, in the fifth chapter, eighteen years later. Henchard is out of favour with the town for selling bad wheat. Only Farfrae, the modern scientific agriculturist, can bring the grain partly back to its original wholesomeness. Once the corruption of the natural aspects of life has begun, the course is irreversible even though science may to some extent improve the situation. Hay and grain stand for struggle between Henchard and Farfrae. This introduction of machinery helps to Farfrae to become rich and leading Casterbridger.

Conclusion:-

Capitalism plays vital role in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'. It works in the society through characters. It is exposed through the treatment given to men as well as women were very badly. In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Thomas Hardy attempted to make us aware of capitalism and its ill effects on the characters. The chief male and female characters are suffered due their low economic status. Susan, Lucetta, Nance Mockridge, mother Cuxsom, Mrs. Stannige, Three Mariners, Mrs. Goddenough, Henchard and many others are suffered on the basis on money.

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