

## Religious Discrepancies in the Victorian Era and their Impact on the Lives of People with Reference to Hardy's Novel, "Tess of d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman"

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### Abstract

Religion has deep impacts on society as it shapes social orders and social laws are formulated on the basis of religious values to facilitate people to lead their lives with peace and harmony. Religion abstains people to do anything that may harm others in any way and acts as a guiding force to help them to stay united and respect all human beings. Religious institutions are important social organizations that play very central role in consolidating people. Religion teaches justice, equality, impartiality and ensure security of people within and outside community. But the nations that leave religious practices, respect of social laws and orders become disintegrated and weak. This is evident from the historical references that how religion has played dominant role in people's social well-being. If religious institutions are corrupt, this affects society negatively. The Victorian age of English literary history that is known for outstanding scientific and technological enterprises became disintegrated in its later years because of religious discrepancies among people. It was the time when new innovations have revolutionized society and people were taking keen interest in learning new scientific theories and their applications. Meanwhile, they were inclined to raise their queries related to religion. Some people were more interested in gaining material prosperity and had kept aside their religious practices like to attend the churches, chapels and learning religious texts. Besides this, there were people were not satisfied with the churches' performances for the biased laws and limited knowledge of the clerics. Different poets and authors tried to depict these religious incongruities in their writings. Of all Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was one of the distinguished literary figures who highlighted this dilemma of the age. He was an eminent writer social critic, novelist and poet. Of all his literary contributions, his novels won him good reputation because of the realistic approach he maintained in his narrations. His famous novels included *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Caster bridge* (1886) and *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Caster bridge* (1886) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). In his novels, Hardy has highlighted the social issues and religious dispositions held by the Victorians and their impacts on contemporary society. *Tess of d'Urbervilles*, Hardy's masterpiece gives a vivid picture of the Victorian society in which people were suffering because of declined morality and

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biased social laws made by the social institutions where laws were meant to favor men over women. The book also condemned the social injustice with the women in patriarchal society where women were merely the objects of exploitation instead of equal and fair treatment. Thomas Hardy highlights the social conditions of his age to reveal the corrupt religious practices and called for societal reform. He was of the view that like men, women should be given right to make independent decisions and laws should be equal for both.

**Key Words:** *Victorian age, Religious discrepancies, biased laws, social institutions, social injustice*

## Introduction

The Victorian Age, rightly called "the beginning of modern era" (Miller), is marked by scientific discoveries and tremendous inventions that had revolutionized world. The incredible host of technological advancements had revived among Victorians the spirit to know, to discover and to probe the nature and phenomenon guided by physical and unseen natural forces. In their quest of discovery, they explored the areas that had not been considered before. They started reading to know the truth about the universe and it was the result of their reading that they had started to question the traditionally held beliefs about nature, surrounding (man's physical world) and religion. Guided by reason, the Victorians were not satisfied with blind devotion of religious orders and laws, rather they wanted rational explanations of the laws they were asked to comply with. It is said that the Victorian era was the first era of human history when Christianity was questioned. In early years of Victorian era, people were very religious and God-fearing, they would practice religious preaching with full devotion and sincerity. Oswald John Simon (1898), in this connection, wrote; "The Bible was considered as the book which literally and exclusively contained the word of God." But new discoveries in the field of science had changed their perceptions towards religion and they had begun to doubts about the traditionally held beliefs. Men's curiosity to know the forces guiding the universe and the power controlling man and his world became the cause of new knowledge and understanding that challenged the orthodox beliefs. Though, it was good change, the same aroused conflicts among the people. That's why it is said that the Victorians era was an era of "conflicting ideologies." According to Andrew Sanders (2003); "It was an age of conflicting explanations and theories, of scientific and economic confidence and of social and spiritual pessimism of a sharpened awareness of the inevitability of progress and of deep disquiet as to the nature of the present."

Religious conflicts started when Charles Darwin shared his observations regarding "Evolution" and "Natural Selection." His ideas terribly affected the Victorian minds who started questioning Christianity that had not been done before. Published in 1859, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in which he rejected the long held religious beliefs regarding the creation of man and his position in the universe created controversy and raised storm among churchmen, scientists and philosophers for the deeper philosophical and religious assumptions which the new understanding of origins seemed to imply. (John W. Clerk and Thomas Mack Hughes: 1890, Francis Darwin: 1892) The publication of the *Descent of Man* by Darwin, further shattered the unsophisticated and simple faith of Victorians and they wanted to know the rational answers of their critical interrogations.

The clerics were unable to justify the claims raised by Darwin and his followers as they were not much educated to satisfy the conflicting queries of modern Victorians. Consequently, the people had rejected the authority of the Church and the Bible with the assumption that it concerns only with the supernatural and considers Christianity as a myth. Sir Charles Lyell (1833) "The religious ideals about body and soul as envisaged in the Biblical account of creation came into sharp contrast with the universe of man mechanically explored. It is here that the Biblical account of Creation was greatly challenged." The churches had lost their authority and society had been disintegrated because of religious conflicts.

Religion plays a very important role in an individual's life for it serves as guiding rules for man and religious places are refuges where people can retire themselves from all worldly restrictions and can find peace. According to Galloway "Religion is Man's faith in a power beyond himself whereby he seeks to satisfy emotional needs and gains stability of life, and which he expresses in acts of worship and service." As per Galloway religion is faith in a trustworthy force that connects man with some superior power (God) that fulfils his desires, gives him strength to go through hardships of life and provides him whatever he prays for. According to this definition both God and his power are unseen. Taylor's concept about religion also strengthens the existence of some mysterious powers that guide people and help them. As per Taylor, "Religion is the belief in spiritual beings." According to Robert Flint, "Religion is man's belief in a being or beings mightier than himself and inaccessible to his senses but not indifferent to his sentiments and actions, with the feelings and practices which flow from such a belief." Religion shapes society as social laws and orders are formed in the light of religion. "Social order is often the infrastructure of religious order." (Douglas and Paden) In Hardy's novel, religion is one of the dominant themes as in Victorian era religion has lost its true essence. Hardy has strongly criticized the superficiality of Victorians' religious beliefs and their lack of spirituality.

Religion is the most important element of society that keep diverse groups people connected and united. Religious values maintain an atmosphere of peace and harmony in a society where people may lead their lives peacefully. But in Victorian age, because of religious discrepancies society had been disintegrated. Through his rich novel, *Tess of d'Urbervilles* (1891), Thomas Hardy's has raised his voice against Victorian's standards of morality and social values that were devoid of any sound foundations. Hardy had depicted the religious discrepancies in the Victorian age through his characters and their struggle in society.

### **Gender Discrimination**

Victorian society was all in all male-dominated. In all spheres of life, man used to be held superior while women were disadvantaged socially, politically and economically. Thomas Hardy had depicted the deprivations, sufferings and miseries of women through *Tess*.

After the accidental death of Prince, the family horse that was the only source of family's income, Tess had to work to support her family. She went to the d'Urbervilles' mansion where her services were needed look after the fowls. She accepted the job of fowl tending to give financial support to her family who in her view would be going to suffer because of her as she held herself responsible for the accidental death of their family horse. This is how an innocent

girl was sent to a world that was unknown to her, where everything was new to the simple village lass who was brought up to endure and compromise.

Thomas Hardy highlighted economic injustice with women in Victorian society that was all in all male dominated society. Women were deprived of their economic right of suitable and better employment opportunities. They were treated as inferior creatures having no will of their own. Hardy, being a feminist, advocated the right of women for they should have their own identity and respectable status in society. Thomas Hardy also presented the dilemma of poor girl, Tess how she suffered because of the ignorance and prejudices of her own parents. They had lot of expectations from the d'Urbervilles, the rich family. When they received a letter in which it was written that Tess' services were needed to them to look after their fowls, they didn't investigate the matter. They were very happy and feeling pride that their daughter was going to serve a family that was, in views of Victorians, was respectable because they were rich. Though, Tess was not willing to go there, she compromised for the sake of her family and sacrificed to maintain the misconceptions of her parents. Through Tess Hardy depicted the miseries of Victorian women how they would be objectified politically and emotionally to surrender their free will. Hardy also portrayed the real picture of the society where the rich were looked up to respectable and honorable without any merit of their own. Hardy attacked this attitude and tried to open the eyes of the authorities.

Alec, the hypocrite monstrous ghost of modern Victorian age, exploited, mistreated and dominated Tess during her services. This cruel master wanted Tess to stay submissive to him as he was her master and could do whatever he wanted. Tess kept on resisting his wickedness but one day this devilish monster took the advantage of her helplessness. He victimized her to satisfy his wild lust. He seduced her and left her pregnant. The simple **"The Maiden" was "Maiden No More."** After this tragic incident, Tess could not continue her job that she was doing to support her poor family. Hardy attacked the rules of nobility practiced in Victorian society where women had no respect at all and men would do whatever they wanted. Women were suppressed physically, politically, economically and emotionally in society. There was no justice for them and no law that could ensure their security. Through Tess, Hardy had depicted the dilemma of all the women of that time who had been suffering without fault of their own. Expressing the miserable plight of Victorian Women Hardy wrote; **"Let the truth be told—women do as a rule live through such humiliations, and regain their spirits, and again look about them with an interested eye."** (pg: 149-50) This statement indicated that Victorian women were absolutely helpless under patriarchy and would went through tortures and humiliation without complain. They were compromising and the object of constant mortification in society. Hardy also unmasked the evil nature, hypocrisy and wickedness of so called Victorian gentry through Alec.

After the tragic incident, when the poor girl came back to her parents' house, they were unhappy with her as she had brought disgrace to them in society. As her mother said, **'You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife!'** (page:117) Hardy exposed the blind justice prevailing in the Victorian age where women were oppressed in the name of family honor. The issue of Tess was not investigated to save Alec, a wealthy, influential and so called respectable Victorian. Hardy attacked the fake moral concept of morality among

Victorians where men and women were treated with discrimination. He highlighted how women were condemned and men were saved.

Tess, once again, went out to continue to work for herself and her family. Her new beginning at Talbothays Dairy Farm was a new struggle with a new man Angel Clare, the son of parson James Clare. Angel was a praiseworthy character in the novel. He was broadminded man and reflected different mindset. He liked the simplicity and chastity in Tess and fell in love with her. Tess also liked his gentle mannerism and practical approach in looking at things. Tess was happy to have a man like Angel who would replace her sad life with happiness. But soon after marriage, Angel and Tess confess their evil past that turned the table for both. Angel confess her affair with a lady and Tess also confessed her mutilated past. Though, Tess forgave him, Angel couldn't resist the truth. The image of Tess that he had imagined in his mind had shattered. Out of Tess' expectations, he reacted like ordinary Victorian man. He weighted Tess guiltier than himself.

As he said; **“O Tess, forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another. My God—how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque—prestidigitation as that!” (329)** He, too, disgraced her by humiliating remarks and left her. Once again, Tess had to suffer not for the sin of her own.

Hardy revealed the male-dominated and gender-biased Victorian practices more intensely by presenting the struggle of Tess with Angel. Both the characters had same past, Angel's confess was praiseworthy and Tess' act of forgiving the affair was outstandingly admirable. But, Tess' confess was treated differently by Angel. For her sincere and honest confess, she was oppressed by patriarchy. She remained disadvantage as ever. Once again, she was all alone to suffer the miseries of her desolate life and there was before her **“a long and stony highway which she had to tread, without aid.” (117)** Though, later on Angel regretted and came back to her, that was too late as Alec had appeared, again like a devil to take the advantage of her wretchedness.

#### **Class Distinction:**

Religion preaches equality for all. But the Victorians were very rigid about their social status. people were judged according to their financial status. The rich would do whatever they wanted; they were not questioned for their actions while the poor would be punished and oppressed for their guilt. Thomas Hardy highlighted this religious discrepancy through Tess' struggle with Alec.

Alec, the son of a rich capitalist, had no faith at all. He was a materialistic ghost for whom money and power was everything. He had no respect for humans, social laws and values instead for him money was everything that could buy him anything he desired. As Hardy wrote in the novel; **“His eyes were equally barren of worldly and religious faith.” (pg:463)** He exploited and humiliated Tess. He seduced her and left her pregnant. He was confident that he was rich and could do anything he wanted. For him Tess was his possession and as master he wanted her to stay submissive to him. As it is mentioned in the novel; **‘Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again. If you are any man’s wife, you are mine!’ (p:475)** The novel criticized the culture of his time that was supporting the rich and powerful in the name of biased religious laws and social orders and the poor and weak were targeted. Because of injustices and discriminations, Victorian society was suffering. People had left to attend the churches and chapels.

After Angel leaves Tess, she was going through very hard times. During this she met Alec by chance. The wicked man, once again, took the advantage of her. He persuaded her to be his wife though he knew she had already married Angel. He intensified her by promising to give financial support to his family. As Hardy writes; **"I have enough and more than enough to put you out of anxiety, both for yourself and your parents and sisters. I can make them all comfortable if you will only show confidence in me."** (pg:480) He was a tempter and exercising the power of his wealth on the poor Tess. He has no sense of guilt for his sin that made Tess suffer. He was mean and selfish.

Alec persuaded Tess to marry him as he had enough money to support her and her family though he knew that Tess was married with Angel Clare and loved him. He exploited her feelings and persuaded her to believe that Angel would not back. Once again he took the advantage of her helplessness and poverty. He exercised his powerful financial status on her. This was obvious from his words when he said; **"Remember, my lady, I was your master once! I will be your master again"** (page: 336).

Hardly presented Alec as a destroyer who treated Tess as an object and his possession. He always suppressed her and dominated her and never considered her a human. Hardy attacked the Victorian standards where women had low status and were treated as inferior creatures. Commenting on Alec, Ian Gregory wrote, "Alec's world, the world of the Stoke-D'Urbervilles, is inseparable from nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism, it is the triumph of the individual bourgeois ethic, what is wanted can be bought" (192).

### **Victorians' Standards of Morality:**

The novel's subtitle "Tess, A Pure Woman" itself is an attack on the fake authorities who were flourishing in name of fake standards of morality and biased laws that they had made for them. As per traditional Victorian standards, Tess is a fallen woman who had had sexual relations outside of marriage. Hardy insists to prove her pure and virtuous because "(her) your sin was not of your (her) own seeking." (p:114) William Paden, in his book, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* argues that the concept of purity is "not limited to such motifs as chastity or ritual preparations for worship." To him, the impure is equated with the "feared profanities" and "what is incompatible with the sacred, and purification is regarded as "the exorcism of profanity."

The novelist Fenton Johnson writes: "History is memory's skin, under which pulses the blood and guts of our real lives. Our stories are our way of fashioning a surface with which we can live, that we may present to our neighbors, our friends, our family, our children. The truth lies not in the facts of our stories but in the longings that set them in motion."

It is, therefore, not surprising that initial reaction to the novel was highly negative. "[A]s everyone knows, this novel stirred up a furious controversy" Keith (83). As a result of the hostility the novel met because of its attack on widely held societal beliefs about chastity and feminine purity, Hardy vowed to give up novel writing. "Well if this sort of thing continues," Hardy proclaimed, "no novelist writing for me. A man must be a fool to deliberately stand up to be shot at" (Zietlow 6). Hardy considered *Tess* to be one of his greatest literary accomplishments, which is why in his general preface to the 1912 Wessex edition of *Tess* he

placed the novel among his “Novels of Character and Environment.” While early critics were scornful of the novel’s questionable morality, it was well received by the reading public. Early twentieth-century critics of *Tess* were correct in noting that Hardy is arguing against the double standard that allows men to have sexual relations outside of marriage but condemns women for doing so no matter what the circumstances. Tess did not consent to a sexual relationship. She was raped by Alec, yet she was condemned by society for having a child out of wedlock as a result of the rape. This cultural criticism is one of Hardy’s many challenges to the social conventions and values of his time found within this text. Hardy is also extremely critical of organized Christianity in several places throughout the novel, including the scene in which Sorrow is actually denied a Christian burial. Hardy also raises questions about the injustice and inequality of a legal system, which finds Alec innocent of any wrongdoing but sentences Tess to death.

Religion has very important role in an individual's life for it serves as guiding rules for man and religious places are refuges where people can retire themselves from all worldly restrictions and can find peace. In Hardy's novel, religion is one of the dominant themes as in Victorian era religion has lost its true essence. He has strongly criticized the superficiality of Victorians' religious beliefs and their lack of spirituality. Describing the lack of spiritual knowledge and limited perception of Victorian man, Hardy writes; **"His eyes were equally barren of worldly and religious faith."** (pg:463)

Hardy attacked the church authorities that were devoid of true spirituality. Their faith was shattered and they were unable to help out people. People had left to attend the churches because of religious biasness.

After being exploited by Alec and rejected by her parents, Tess was constantly tormented because of her ugly past and horrible future troubles that she had to face everything all alone. As Hardy wrote; **"In place of the excitement of her return, and the interest it had inspired, she saw before her a long and stony highway which she had to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy."** (119) She visited her friends and neighborhood but nothing could console her. Emotionally oppressed, she took the way to church thinking she might find peace of her mind. But she just met disappointment there as the visitors were just whispering and speaking critically about her. As it was mentioned in the novel; **"The people who had turned their heads turned them again as the service proceeded; and at last observing her, they whispered to each other. She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more."**(120-121)

Hardy highlighted the helplessness and disappointments of Victorian women; and the attitude of the visitors at church. Everyone was critical without sharing a single word of sympathy with her and without bothering to ask her about the culprit who was responsible for her miserable state. They had their own judgments to declare a woman as "a pure woman" or "a fallen woman." As per their laws, the helpless and victimized Tess was "a fallen woman." Hardy censored the churches and social institutions where authorities and stakeholders were guided by their set criteria for the judgment of people. He was of the view that people should be judged by their intentions not by their as he mentioned through Angel Clare who asked himself; **“who was the moral woman?”** and concluded that **“[t]he beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done,**

**but among things willed.” (421)** This religious corruption was one of the severe causes of widespread social evils in Victorian society. Religious institutions were not much powerful to use their authorities to restrict people with wealthy background in promoting immorality.

After this tragic incident, Tess went to her parents who left her alone in her hard time because according to Victorians' standards of morality she was a fallen woman. Though, she had no intentions to indulge in adultery, it was Alec who had cheated her. Alec was not questioned and she was punished.

Hardy uses Angel's Brazilian encounter with the “large-minded stranger” (422) to demonstrate the relativity of all religious codes and cultural value systems. In so doing, the supreme authority and correctness of any one society's beliefs is undermined. After telling this stranger about what Tess had done and how he had responded to her confession, Angel became ashamed by “[h]is own parochialism” (422), especially when the stranger expressed his belief that Tess was innocent of any wrongdoing and that Angel was wrong to have left her. Hardy writes: The stranger had sojourned in many more lands and among many more peoples than Angel; to his cosmopolitan mind such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve. It also reinforces the novel's central belief that Victorian England's social, ethical, religious and cultural values are imperfect. Hardy approves of Tess and Angel ultimately questioning and criticizing parts of their own culture's values, which are discriminatory and oppressive, and often questions and criticizes himself through the authorial voice of the narrator and, especially, by calling Tess a pure woman in the subtitle. *Tess* contains a fierce condemnation of the social, ethical, moral, religious and political values of Victorian England. A broad and expansive literary explication of *Tess* is required in order to thoroughly comprehend the depth and breadth of the cultural criticisms contained within the novel.

### **Biased Social Laws:**

After being exploited by Alec, Tess came back to her parents and was constantly tormented because of her ugly past. She visited her friends etc but nothing could console her and could help out her to be settled down mentally and emotionally. Tess took the way to church thinking she might find peace of her mind there. But she just met disappointment there as the visitors were just whispering and speaking critically about her. Hardy criticized the fakeness of the churches that instead of consoling people like Tess, and resisting the social evils by punishing the wicked like Alec, the church authorities were biased. Indeed, the churches have lost authorities as clergyman were not much educated and broad-minded to understand how to comfort the distressed. Visitors at the church had no sympathy for the poor lady who had been suffering badly because of the sin that was not her own. As Hardy writes;

**" Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgements had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?" (pg:509)**

Here, Hardy has left his readers to understand and perceive the meaning of "sin" and "sinner." In other words, he is shaking their minds to be rational in their judgments.

Time passed on and Tess gave birth to a baby whom she named 'Sorrow.' Nobody was happy at the birth of the unfortunate whom Hardy ironically wrote, **"the Undesired"** and **"bastard gift of shameless Nature, who respects not the social law."** (136) Unlike other Christian children in England, Sorrow was not baptized as Mr. John, Tess' father, was afraid that the news of this unnatural happening would affect his honor and respect in society. He did not allow the local parson to come to baptize the child. This was the indication of extreme cruelty of the Victorian society, even people had no sympathy for an innocent child and helpless mother. Like his chaste mother, her innocent child was also suffering because of the sin of his father, Alec and society was all together to punish both the innocent and weak creatures who were very easy to be humiliated and cursed unlike strong and wealthy Alec, the real culprit. Hardy depicted this harsh reality of Victorian society where the poor and the weak were the object of humiliation while whatever the rich and the powerful would do that used to be considered as norm.

One day, Sorrow fell severely ill, and Tess' motherly affection made her think again and again that her child was suffering as he was not baptized. For the salvation of her child, she herself had to perform this act to Christianize her little baby who, like his unfortunate mother, was a societal abuse. Tess did this very magnificently as while she was performing the act, she was not looking less than a clergyman who performs this act in front of a parson. As Hardy wrote in the novel; **"Tess then stood erect with the infant on her arm beside the basin, the next sister held the Prayer-Book open before her, as the clerk at church held it before the parson; and thus the girl set about baptizing her child."** (134)

Hardy made Tess to perform this religious act to attack the Victorian patriarchy that would administer the churches. Being pious and chaste, clergyman would perform certain religious acts like baptism. People used to look up to them with hopes and expectations; and they were highly admired for rendering their services. But the Victorian churches were biased with women and they were not using their authority to curb the anti-religious practices that had become the usual norm of society. Tess' father deprived her innocent children to be baptized out of his Victorian pride but the church authorities were null and void. Tess, like a clergyman performed the act of christening her own son. Hardy made Tess to baptize her child that was the most praiseworthy action in the novel. While she performed the act, she was reflecting unusual light that was the glow and attraction of her purity and innocence that the cruel society had rejected for their fake standards of honor and value. As it was written in the novel; **"The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye pupils shone like a diamond."** (136) Hardy leveled that the real purity is the purity of intentions or inner purity that reflects souls while self-created images of purity and innocence are all fake. Hardy tried to convince the people with conventional beliefs and the slaves of the socially set biased conventions to learn to identify the application of sincere expressions of faith as demonstrated by Tess. Truth of faith is judged by the intentions of people regardless of any other thing. The real purity is the purity of heart.

At last Sorrow was baptized elegantly unlike other Christian children, but the little unfortunate creature could not live anymore to resist the societal injustice and died. As Hardy wrote; **"So**

**passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature, who respects not the social law." (pg:136)**

Sorrow was an unwanted child who was condemned by society as "the Undesired." Each child comes in this mortal world as innocent for he has nothing to do with sin, so was Sorrow. But this innocent child was treated absolutely differently as he was the sin, his birth was unwanted and his death was meaningless for society. He was neither a Christian nor a human rather, he was just the product of sin. Thomas Hardy highlighted the extreme cruelty that had become the everyday practice in Victorian society.

Tess' act of baptizing her child for his salvation was a very praiseworthy action and she deserved to be praised and respected for the extraordinary courage she demonstrated, but the biased social and religious laws and narrow-minded church authorities disappointed her by saying that her son was not baptized because a woman was not hold authoritative for such a dignified deed. After the death of Sorrow, Tess was struggling for a proper Christian burial for him. She went to the parson and told him that she, herself, had baptized her child and asked if he could allow him a proper religious burial that he denied. The main cause was the rigidity of the churches to accept that a woman could baptize a child.

**"The man and the ecclesiastic fought within him, and the victory fell to the man." (pg:137)**

Hardy uses this scene to convince the people with conventional beliefs and the slaves of the socially set baseless conventions to learn to identify the application of sincere expressions of faith as demonstrated by Tess. Truth of faith is judged by the intentions of people regardless of any other thing. The real purity is the purity of heart.

Distressed after the death of her child, Tess was struggling for a proper Christian burial for him. She went to the parson and told him that she, herself, had baptized her child and asked if he could allow him a proper religious burial that he denied. As it was written in the novel; **"The man and the ecclesiastic fought within him, and the victory fell to the man." (pg:137)** Hardy revealed how women were humiliated and rejected in all institutions in Victorian society. Her child was first deprived of Christianizing then proper Christian burial for he was taken as unbaptized. Tess pressed her point, further challenging the Parson on church doctrine that the unbaptized are not accorded a proper Christian burial, he denied supporting his refusal in the light of existing church doctrines. As Hardy wrote; **"I would willingly do so if only we two are concerned. But I must not — for certain reasons." (138)** Hardy condemned the church authorities and biased social laws that was all in all against women. This attitude of the church authorities were the cause of religious fragmentation and people had lost their faith in religion and attend churches. As Tess finally told the parson: **"Then I don't like you . . . and I'll never come to your church again." (138)**

Sorrow was buried in a nearly forgotten part of the church graveyard, where, as per Hardy **"unbaptized infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned are laid." (138)** That was how, Hardy depicted the extreme miserable plight of Victorian society to shake their minds.

### **Exploitation of Religion**

Religion is a power that is used to control social problems. In Christianity, this power is exercised by the church members. In Victorian era the churches had lost their authority because they were unable to satisfy people by answer their queries. The clerics were not much educated as after getting education people were making their ways to industries for economic welfare. Consequently, the church administration was in the hands of less educated and inexperienced members. This was one of the biggest causes of societal issues during the Victorian era.

At church, Tess met a young sign painter who was painting some texts related to sin, adultery and damnation. Tess asked him if he believe in what he was painting. He replied; **'Believe that tax? Do I believe in my own existence!'** (pg: 114) She expressed these were horrible. Listening to Tess' remarks he got irritated and spoke harshly; **"I cannot split hairs on that burning query."**(114)

This statement reflects that church authorities were, all in all, devoid of spiritual knowledge and wisdom to help out suffering souls. They had no interest to know the interpretations of the biblical texts, rather they just believed in spreading the texts and that was, according to them, was their duty as religious person. The young artisan told Tess; **'I have walked hundreds of miles this past summer, painting these taxes on every wall, gate, and stile the length and breadth of this district. I leave their application to the hearts of the people who read 'em'.** (114) This statement indicated the irony of the church authorities who would terrify people rather than making them understand religion and implement their understanding in daily lives. Religion preaches to be thoughtful and not to do and say anything without complete knowledge and understanding of the matters.

Visitors at the church had no sympathy for the poor lady, Tess, who had been suffering badly because of the sin that was not her own. She had simple unsophisticated religious thoughts that she would practice with full devotion. She had no intention to indulge in the severe guilt she was condemned for. Alec was responsible for her misery and she was just bearing the burden of that beast's sin on her physically weak but spiritually strong self. As Hardy writes; **"Never in her life—she could swear it from the bottom of her soul—had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgements had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?"** (pg:509)

Here, Hardy exposed how Victorians looked at women, how the weak creatures would be tortured and oppressed after they were victimized by the corrupt gentry. They were disgraced, left alone mercilessly to deal with all the cruelties. Hardy shook the minds of people to be rational in their judgments. Instead of punishing innocent girls for their unintentional guilt, they needed to target the real culprits.

Alec d'Urbeville is presented by Hardy as worldly man who was devoid of spirituality. He was a wicked man who exploited the innocent Tess and left her to suffer for his sin. Alec was a destructor because he remained the cause of destruction of Tess' happiness throughout.

Alec's conversion was temporary and finished no sooner he saw Tess. He holds her responsible for his state and said;

**"The religious channel is left dry forthwith; and it is you who have done it!"** (pg:470)

He also said,

**"My religious mania, or whatever it was, is over."** (pg:480)

These statements revealed the weak faith and religious instability of most of the Victorians. After Angel leaves Tess, she was going through very hard times. During this she met Alec by chance. The wicked man, once again, took the advantage of her. He persuaded her to be his wife though he knew she had already married Angel. He intensified her by promising to give financial support to his family. As Hardy writes;

Douglas brilliantly relates concepts of purity and pollution to ritual. She criticizes 'anti-ritualist prejudice' that has made it difficult to find instances of ritual uncleanness in Christian practice (62-3). In contrast, she emphasizes the significance of ritual to understanding purity ideas, articulating that her conception of purity is symbolic ritual cleanliness. She understands uncleanness as matter out of place, which can be understood through order (41). According to her, impurity or pollution falls under disorder or danger, which should be excluded from a culture in order to maintain it (41). It is ritual that controls social disorder, namely, impurity: "ritual controls the danger of the disorder, recognizing the potency of disorder, finding posers and truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort (95)"

J. Z. Smith has argued ceaselessly that one should not accept the description of the text at hand without doubt. According to Smith, "no privilege should be granted to any block of material." Data are what scholars choose for their arguments; he asserts, "in culture, there is no text, it is all commentary. According to Smith, the ritual suggested in a text does not show the real systems of the culture but represents, at most, the ideals of the culture. In a recent book about medieval rituals. Philippe Buc provides an example that supports Smith's views of ritual. In *The Dangers of Ritual*, Buc shows that the modern idea of ritual is not the same as that of early medieval texts. He asserts. "texts were forces in the practice of power. They should not be decrypted for (elusive) facts about rituals and then set aside."<sup>44</sup> Since historical facts are hidden behind the intentions of medieval writers. Buc concludes that we cannot accept the text as it is. According to Buc. a majority of the medieval sources are. the product of interpretation or of attempts to channel interpretation."<sup>45</sup> Just like J. Z. Smith. Buc concludes that this problem can be overcome through a specific and contextual approach. (46)

James Watts argues that the rhetorical purpose of the texts rather than their symbolic meanings should be considered. According to Watts, an ancient text's meaning may not be related to the ritual's meaning and function in ancient culture. The rhetoric of the texts, he says, is more likely to "commend" a ritual than to "explain" it. Watts suggests that the rhetorical goals of ritual texts in the Torah may include: the validation of the ritual and its form on the basis of ostensibly ancient textual authority: and/or persuasion to motivate performance of the rituals: and/or persuasion to accept the whole text's authority because of its authoritative instruction on ritual performance."

As mentioned above, in this book, societies, social systems, or social order are overemphasized. Mary Douglas even appears to be obsessed with the idea of society, which, to her, is "a powerful image and potent in his own right to control or to stir men to action (1 15)." She focuses on the function of ritual in a society. In particular, she relates purity systems to functions of the societal order, including social hierarchy (97, 126) To her, ""all spiritual powers are part of the social system and "the power of universe is ultimately hitched to society (1 14)." Without a social

process that makes order, nothing can be explained: 'Dirt was created by the differentiating activity of mind, it was a by-product

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