

Class conflict in victorian fiction with especial Reference to Hardy's novels

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ABSTRACT

The Victorian novel is dominated by class conflict. This research paper is an attempt to define the different classes of the society and the attitude of the Victorian novelists, especially, that of Hardy's, towards class distinction. The present study includes the nineteenth century novelists, namely, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy who in their works focus upon class conflict. The paper, while highlighting the attitude of the Victorian writers towards class conflict, mainly explores the major novels of Hardy who, being highly conscious about his humble origin, presents such characters who are inclined to social improvement. In Victorian fiction the elite class is marked with meanness and moral degradation. The research study would provide relevant information about the conflict between haves and have not especially with reference to Hardy's fiction.

INTRODUCTION

Class, a term mainly conceived by Karl Marx, is a social phenomenon which refers to social stratification. A society is not stratified by classes only; it is also stratified by caste, gender, race, language, religion, age, etc. Basically, such systems of social stratification are based upon inequality which is the worst social problem resulting in conflicts. History is the reflection of class conflicts originated by the mode of production and the relationship between the owners of the means of production and those who work for them. In this

relationship the dominant class exploits the subordinate class and it is the essence of conflict from historical standpoint. Usually the social institutions are operated according to the interests of the class who dominates economy. In such system law that punishes the poor, facilitates the rich resulting in class confrontation. Hardy, the last of the Victorian novelists, blamed the state for supporting potent against weak. In a society worker's exploitation and alienation from the profit of their labour result in violent contention and according to Hardy, the remedy for this requires the emergence of a socialist state.

Society is a conjunction of different classes. Social organization is based upon certain divisions such as ranks and statuses. The social stratification, on the whole, in the nineteenth century is marked as upper classes, middle classes and the working classes. In a society classes are organized, arranged, disarranged or rearranged, the process continues. Social upheaval displaces the arrangement of the different social orders. The topmost classes can be relegated whereas the other classes emerge and are advanced to higher status.

REVIEW

Hegel, an idealist, gives prior importance to ideas as being responsible of historical revolution, whereas Marx, a materialist and an eye witness to the economic crisis, holds the economic structure responsible for historical change. Marx, an advocate of the political, economic and social policies, labeled as Marxism, draws attention to the important factors such as social classes. Each class' ideology is linked to its basic economic interests. Every historical stage with its own economic system generates another economic system. According to Marwick eventually, "... there is a clash, an epoch of social revolution" (Marwick, 2001).

The history describes the events of the past and the different stages such as feudalism and modern bourgeoisie, capitalism and socialism, etc. Each stage is the result of the way the wealth is distributed. The production and distribution of wealth exercises great role and according to Marwick even, "...classes themselves being determined by their relationship to the conditions under which wealth is produced ..." (Marwick, 2001). *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) declares that every history, infact, is the history of class struggle. For instance, the bourgeoisie revolted against the aristocracy and, later, it had a clash with the proletariat or the working class. Growing in number day by day the workers became quite conscious that there was a conflict and clash between their interests and that of their social superiors. The

socialists sympathized with the proletariat's lot. Their major concern was to concentrate upon the causes of hostility between the classes. Marx and Engel's main concern was as how to emancipate the proletariat from the clutches of the ruling class. The nineteenth century novelists were greatly impressed by the teaching of Karl Marx and according to Lambert and Schofield it led them, "...to describe the lives of working men and women, slaves...." (Schofield and Lambert,2004).

The era of industrial development gave way to humanitarianism. The Victorian writers took the task of social reformation. They wanted to fight against the social evils including injustice. Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843) dealt with the increasing gap between the rich and the poor. The nineteenth century England faced the social, political and economic commotion. There was agitation and repulsion against the existing social order. There was a clash between proletarians and masters. Marx and Engels, the economists, offered the world their economic viewpoints through *Communist Manifesto* which is of prophetic importance. Marx and Engels strove to inculcate the sense of duty and right amongst the lower rank. Injustice done to the lower classes provoked many writers to disapprove capitalism. The nineteenth century novelists had an inquisitive approach to the arduous contemporary problems. They probed deep into the social matters. The leading authors were given to the task of social regeneration. Many factors were held responsible for social turbulence. Amongst the existing problems, the question of social class was of grave nature because of the increasing hostility between the social ranks. Jesse Matz states that the, "Writers took a new view of what it meant to be rich, to be poor, to be middle class. These things had, of course, always been the subject of fiction, but the modern novel helped to get at the very foundation of what D.H. Lawrence called "class-bound consciousness." (Matz, 2004).

The writers revealed the condition of the masses before the reading public. On one hand the degenerated industrial working class caught the attention of the writers on the other hand the rising middle class was of great attraction for the Victorian novelists to depict it in their work. The writers made novel a vehicle to launch political, social and religious questions. While projecting the problem of class conflict the writers tried to remove the gap between the classes.

DISCUSSION AND ARGUMENT

Charles Dickens is a towering figure amongst the Victorian novelists. His novels delineate nostalgia and in them we find a wistful yearning for past. Nicholas in *The Life and Adventure of Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) after getting financial prosperity intends to buy his father's house to revive the bygone memories. Dickens, a writer with social and moral outlook, could never erase those strong impressions of childhood. He could not forget his poor and uncertain social status. His spirit of humanity is greatly admired. His motive is to inculcate benevolence. He wants to admonish us that the sufferers in any class should not remain unnoticed. Dickens urges social resurgence. The working class in the age of industrialization was the worst of the sufferers. The eminent Victorian novelists unveiled their regretful condition in their fiction. According to Dennis Walder the writers were concerned about, "... the contemporary plight of the newly industrialized working class..." (Walder, 2001). Dickens is much influenced by Carlyle, the Victorian thinker. He in the beginning showed that criminals are the victims of society but later realized that their presence is a constant threat for society. Dickens learnt a great deal from his experiences and observations of life around. He had an eye on the ugliness. Dickens opposed the established authority and was concerned with the respectable poor. He turned against false gentility and aristocracy.

Both Dickens and Hardy deal with the failings of characters and seem to sympathize with them. Dickens characters are the victims of social institutions. He blames social mechanism more than the individuals as the breeder of evils numberless. Dickens was highly conscious about class distinction and his awareness about social partings is manifested in his work. He declares that individuals do not enjoy equal status in life and the society is formed of different ranks such as one may be a blacksmith, goldsmith or coppersmith. This shows his awareness about class distinction. He, infact is mainly concerned with social attitudes and *Great Expectations* (1861) is a story, "...of upward social mobility across class lines..." (Bloom, 2007). By the time Dickens wrote *Great Expectations* there was a change in his mood. He no longer cherished the feeling that the poor were better than the aristocracy. In his novels we are made to see the horrible images of London and its very stagnation. Dickens is labeled as the greatest of the English novelists. He, being a journalist and a man of radical ideas, turned against the middle classes. His novels provide a panoramic view of society and are labeled as moral counsels.

Dickens wants to remove the gap between social groups. *Great Expectations* is about Pip's development. Pip is a round character having passion for upward social mobility. Magwitch's character shows the affect of

environment on individuals. Magwitch, the criminal, belongs to the discarded social group. Yet he is better than Miss Havisham who keeps Pip under false perception regarding his benefactor. Her character is marked with sadism and vindictiveness. She cheats Pip, whereas, Magwitch utilizes all his faculties to award Pip for his little acts of kindness. Dickens assaults the people who have sound financial status as compassionless. Magwitch discloses the true state of affairs before Pip who has a passion for upward social mobility. He tells Pip that he saved every guinea he earned for his education and prosperous future. Magwitch worked hard and lived rough because he wanted Pip to be a gentleman. The novel is drenched in irony. It also reflects the simplicity of Magwitch's nature.

Dombey And Son (1847) was a huge success. It gave a new direction to Dickens' literary career. It was better than the previous works where Dickens critically comments on the social condition of England. Dickens' novels mainly show an inclusive social picture of the nineteenth century society. *Dombey and Son* highlights the social transformation, affect of industrialization on individual and social affairs giving way to modernization. Paul Dombey, representative of the upper section, is the victim of his illusions. The attitude of the higher stratum of society is marked with callousness. Unfortunately, Mr. Dombey's wife dies soon after the birth of the second child. Mr. Dombey is ashamed of the idea of having a nurse for his baby. Eventually, Mr. Dombey hires Mrs. Toddle, who is called Polly, to take care of his little son. Mr. Dombey renames Polly as Richards. Polly is of low social status. Dickens ironically comments that little Paul remains intact despite his close contact with the lower class. The following lines are drenched with irony. It is found that, "little Paul, suffering no contamination from the blood of the Toddle, grew stouter and stronger everyday". (Dickens, 1847).

Dickens through his writings highlights the importance of education. Knowledge is a source of wisdom which in turn is the fountainhead of power. Power may level the way towards social elevation. Power has multiple forms. It blesses the person in the disguise of mental or moral vigor. In Dickens' novels, we find references, which vivify his motive of novel writing. According to Herold Bloom, Dickens thinks that, "Literacy has a transformative impact on the social order." (Bloom, 2007). *Great Expectations* is about Pip's education and development. Dickens' motive is to show that, "... literacy is the enabling condition for social mobility in the modern world." (Bloom, 2007).

Pip aspires for Estella who seems to him like a distant star. Ironically Magwitch, the criminal who turns out to be Pip's benefactor, is Estella's father. Here we find an ironical relationship between refinement and coarseness. In this regard, Herold Bloom states that, "Dickens has taken us through a course

that weighs the costs and benefits of social mobility and does not yield an optimistic judgment. Pip leaves behind the innocence of his life with Joe for the travails of an education which will make him increasingly ashamed of his common boots and coarse hands. It will teach him to become a liar ...” (Bloom, 2007).

In the Victorian age the task of social reform was performed by writers in multitude. George Eliot in *Adam Bede* (1859) hints towards the proud class who pays poor rates and always remains worried about their own profit. Dealing with the traditional provincial life George Eliot concentrates on ordinary human experience. In *Adam Bede* she depicts the society affected by feudalism including squires, tenants, farmers, agricultural labourers and skilled workers. Her characters show psychological and sociological insight.

Charles Kingsley, like other Victorian novelists, concentrates on the state of England. Especially, in *Yeast* (1851) and *Alton Locke* (1850) he focuses upon the British working classes who were subject to victim treatment. Trollope also exposes that how the nobles of the society exploit the system for their benefit. He detests the way, the so-called noble exploit the system for their private interests. Emily Bronte in *Wuthering Heights*, too, (1847) sheds light on the relationship between the rich and the poor. The novel is based upon the clash between opposing interests. Benjamin Disraeli launches his conception that all the classes must perform their roles with loyalty for the betterment of the state. He subtitles his novel *Sybil* (1845) as ‘Two Nations’. The majority of the writers portray the rich as callous having no sympathy for the poor. George Meredith’s *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) is about the social system where the young, positive wills are not fulfilled and resultantly dashed to doom.

George Eliot in her fiction concentrates on the exposure of vices and weaknesses of common human beings. She uses irony as a tool for social reform. Hardy also uses irony as an instrument to expose the social evils. In his novels, he concentrates upon the elements responsible for the prevailing social disorder. He, being a socialist, has particular affinity for certain people of society, especially, the lower masses. In his novels, Hardy mainly deals with the relationship of labourers and farmers. He belongs to the intermediate class. Most of his characters belong to the better-informed class, the class which was pressurized by the process of industrialization and felt the need to educate them. One of the common goals of Hardy’s characters may be described as to acquire knowledge to improve social status or to rise in the world. George Eliot’s characters also struggle to improve themselves. According to E. M. Tappan, “In one way her novels may be said to have the same theme; the chief character longs for a nobler and better life than he has, and at last, after many efforts, he finds it.” (Tappan, 2006).

In Hardy's novels we find a hint to the metamorphic classes of the nineteenth century. Hardy, in his fiction, deals with the developing capitalist society. Infact, it is possible on the part of the families to uplift from their present status, whereas, the families who had enjoyed better days in past, presently, they are doomed to decline. Marina de Regt says that, "A positive result is that some people of lower social status groups have been able to improve their social and economic status, yet this does not automatically mean that social inequalities have diminished." (Regt, 2008). Hardy's sophisticated characters are not ideal human beings. He shows that social superiors are ethical inferiors and are hypocritical.

The Victorians were awfully status conscious and Hardy presents such characters who are inclined to improve their status. Money can be the rootage to social amelioration. Usually writers project such characters who are strong in material sense but from moral standpoint they are marked with certain deficiencies. In the *Hand of Ethelberta* (1951) Hardy ironically raises the question that in the nineteenth century, "Was the moral incline upward or down?" (Hardy, 1951). *Far from The Madding Crowd* (1969) also has similar theme. Sergeant Troy was a well educated and well bred man who had access to the best educational institute, having command over languages including Chinese. Hardy comments that Troy, "... rose to be a sergeant without trying at all. Ah! Such a blessing it is to be high-born; nobility of blood will shine out even in the ranks and files". (Hardy, 1969). Troy wins Bathsheba on account of his superior social and educational background. Troy loves Fanny but hesitates to be associated with her as she is a mere servant girl. Though socially superior, Hardy rejects Troy on moral grounds. According to Boldwood, Troy is a gay man, a doctor's son by name and an earl's son by nature. In this regard Delia Da Sousa Correa says that, "...The sergeant grew up in Weatherbury, he is a man of great respectability and high honour-indeed, a nobleman by blood'...Boldwood reveals the scandal that, Troy's mother was, infact, married to' a poor medical man,' but formed' a secret attachment' to 'the Late Lord Severn', Leaving Troy's parentage in some doubt... We later learn that Troy's watch, proffered as a gift to Bathsheba, carries the motto of the earls of severn. Troy tells Bathsheba, 'It was all the fortune that ever I inherited', but he takes great pride in the spurious claims to nobility that is it / lends him. 'That watch has regulated imperil interests in its time. The stately ceremonial, the courtly assignment, pompous travels, and Lordly sleep..." (Correa, 2000). Hardy believes that social ascend does not mean ethical ascend rather, sometimes, social upward movement results in moral descent. The majority of the Victorian writers were also concerned about such social condition.

Hardy's stories are rather allegories with much deeper meaning. They are the allegories of social significance. *The Return of the Native* (1964)

revolves around the people representing different classes of the society. The people of Heath are either turf or furz cutters. Diggory Venn, a dairyman's son, is a traveling reddleman. He sells the red pigment which is used to color the sheep for the fair. Mrs. Yeobright has better plans for her son Clym who is sent to Paris to be a diamond dealer. She disapproves Clym's desire to return and educate the people of the Heath. Clym rejects to do the material business and devotes his life for the spiritual cause. He returns with the mission to do something worthy before he expires. "He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class". (Hardy,1964).

Tess of The D'urbervilles (1891) records the downfall of the English peasantry, an independent class, which gradually became extinct. Tess belongs to an intermediate class. The tragedy starts with the revelation of Tess' noble blood. The irony is that she has to pay the price of the sins committed by her ancestors. Hardy feels that the way Alec seduces Tess, similarly, in past some of Tess' mailed ancestors dealt ruthlessly with the peasant girls. Alec is not a real D'urbervilles but he behaves in the manner of aristocrats who rape country girls on account of their weak social status. Alec admits before Tess that, "You, too, the real blood of which I am but the base imitation...." (Hardy,1891). Alec, who represents the new urban class, makes false use of the title of Tess' ancestors. The affair between Tess and Alec signifies the decline of ancient aristocracy who is a mere piece of toy in the hands of the new urban class.No sooner it is dawned upon Tess' father that he belongs to an ancient and knightly family of D'urbervilles he declines to render his services as a mere haggler. In this regard Marina de Regt comments that, "In the past, there was a close link between people's social status and the work they performed". (Regt,2008).

John Durbeyfield felt exhilarated at the discovery of his ancient blood. His rejection to perform his duty serves to be prologue to tragedy. Tess, the eldest amongst the children, is encumbered to solve the financial problem of the family. It would lead her to the catastrophic end. Tess' father refused to earn a living, whereas, Alec is a womanizer. These traits of the before mentioned characters shed light on Hardy's attitude towards aristocrats who consider it a sign of shame to work and earn and whose lust victimizes the poor peasant girls. Later, Tess marries Angel Clare and her status is improved because of Angel's clerical background. The estrangement soon after the marriage, because of Tess' guilty past, reduces her status and once again, she is engaged in rough tasks on Flintcomb Ash farm. She is never portrayed as socially superior despite her noble ancestry. Hardy deals with the rise and fall of the families. It reminds us of Shelley's *Ozymandias* (1818) which is about the fall of a great emperor whose statue lies shattered in the desert. Hardy depicts the ancient owners as present tillers of the soil. According to Merry

Williams such instances highlight that, “Particularly family fortunes have changed since the time of the D’Urbervilles; the inhumanity of the relationship between the classes has not...” (Williams, 1974).

Hardy’s novel *Jude the Obscure* (1972) presents Jude who has the goal to achieve academic excellence. Jude stays with his great aunt who owns a baker’s shop and belongs to a semi-independent class. Whereas Jude’s teacher, Phillston is a struggling schoolmaster. Jude being self-educated does not find any opportunity to improve himself. The desire to improve and educate causes him to go to Christminster. Later on, he finds himself in a grievous situation. The realization is dawned upon him that his education is useless to help him get admission in any good institution. He could not turn his dreams into reality and his vision to be the son of the University cannot come true. Jude’s desire to seek his goal costs him his life. Jude remains perpetually obscure. The title of the novel is ominous.

Hardy’s novels depict the capitalist society where people strive to improve social rank. In the world of Hardy nuptial affairs are associated with social status. In *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1994) Fancy who loves refinement is in the state of dilemma. She has three suitors such as Dick Dewy, the son of a local tranter, Fred Shiner, the rich farmer and churchwarden and Parson Maybold. Dick is not considered to be a proper match for Fancy because of his low social position. Fancy is above Dewy Dick and below Maybold as far as her social status concerns. The three suitors represent three different social ranks and it is important on Fancy’s part as which class she intends to join.

Fancy, a vain girl, loves the refinement of mind and manners. In the chapter entitled ‘Into Temptations’ Maybold proposes Fancy saying, “Don’t refuse, don’t ... It would be foolish of you- I mean cruel! of course we would not live here! Fancy I had had for a long time the offer of an exchange of livings with a friend in Yorkshire, but I have hitherto refused on account of my mother. There we would go. Your musical powers shall be still further developed; you shall have whatever pianoforte you like; you shall have anything Fancy, anything to make you happy-pony-carriage, flowers, birds, pleasant society; yes, you have enough in you for any society, after a few months of travel with me, Will you, Fancy, marry me?” (Hardy,1994). Fancy loves Dick passionately who is trusting and generous, but at the sight of great temptations, she, for a moment, finds herself on the brink to give her consent to Maybold as the response of his proposal. Recovering afterwards, she withdraws and writes to Maybold imploring him as not to reveal the secret meeting between them. Her initial decision to marry Maybold is on the account of Maybold’s sound social footings. The novel highlights the worthy members of the society as shallow minded. After their marriage Dick out of simplicity says to Fancy,

“We’ll have no secrets from each other, darling will we ever? - no secret, at all’. ‘None from today, ‘said Fancy ...and thought of a secret she would never tell”. (Hardy,1994).

Hardy regrets the displacement of the choir, an ecclesiastical bandsman, by an isolated organist, namely Fancy. The choir consists of people who are skilled workers or tradesmen and not labourers. They form the intermediate class taking care of the church music. Maybold, an urban invader, whose sermons are an awful muddle and Fred Shiner, the farmer, cause the deterioration of the choir. They want to marry Fancy and their encouragement of her to play organ music is the consequence of private motives. The ruination of the choir was followed by the gradual decline of people’s interest in church. The choir helplessly watches its rival Fancy who is more concerned with her looks than to play the music. She, infact, wants to improve her class through marriage. Hardy quotes, “So they stood and watched the curls’ of hair trailing down the back of the successful rival, and the waving of her feather, as she swayed her head. After a few timid notes and uncertain touches her playing became markedly correct, and towards the end full and free. But, whether from prejudice or unbiased judgment, the vulnerable body of musicians could not help thinking that the simpler notes they had been wont to bring forth were more in keeping with the simplicity of their old church than the crowded chords and interludes it was her pleasure to produce.” (Hardy,1994).

In Hardy’s novel we find a reference to class distinction. Hardy never approves class distinction and states, “I wish there were no different ranks in the world, and that contrivance were not a necessary faculty to have at all”. (Hardy,1951). He is in disagreement towards class distinction. Hardy’s own marriage with Emma Gifford is not marked with congruousness as Emma belonged to the upper sections of society. The relationship between two classes, the rich and the poor, can seldom be sound. In *The Hand of Ethelberta* the heroine, namely, Ethelberta is the self reflection of the author. She is the fifth of ten children. Her life is marked with exertion to rise to a higher rank. There is a reference to her attempts to improve her status. Her first marriage in the Petherwin family causes her to pay a heavy price. She is forbidden to own her relations openly.

A feeling of discomfort is always attached with the characters who try to improve their status. Ethelberta gives herself to catharsis and there is parallelism between Ethelberta’s fictional and the author’s real life history. The following passage is significant with its marked subjectivity. Ethelberta is weary, as she has been struggling to get rid of her low social status. She becomes a part of the elite class by marrying in that class and in Ethelberta’s words she, “... cannot endure this kind of existence any longer. I sleep at night as if I had committed a murder: I start up and see processions of people,

audiences, and battalion of lovers obtained under false pretences-all denouncing me with the finger of ridicule.” (Hardy,1951).

Mrs. Doncastle, a woman of improved social status, is portrayed as shallow minded. She objects that Ethelberta’s father Mr. Chickereel, and Ethelberta should not have hidden their humble origin from them. Her husband remarks lightly that it is their personal matter if they did not disclose their family secret. The conversation of the husband and wife amuses the readers when Mrs. Doncastle’s husband inquires upon his wife that why did not she tell Ethelberta that her, “...grandfather narrowly escaped hanging for shooting his rival in a duel!’ Of course not. There was no reason why I should give extraneous information.” ‘Nor was there any reason why she should”. (Hardy,1951).

In the world of Hardy marriage is a way to social ascend. After the death of her first husband Ethelberta is having a suitor Christopher Julian, the musician. Ethelberta informs her younger sister Picotee about Christopher Julian’s low social status that she will not marry him till he gets rich.

Ethelberta, a storyteller and romancer, goes to the residence of the lord Mountclere to entertain the guests. She relates the story of a girl’s humble origin which, infact, is her own real history. While narrating the tale she breaks down. Finally, Lord Mountclere, who sensed the irony of the situation, saves Ethelberta from further humiliation saying, “Don’t tell more: you think too much of them: they are no better than you!” (Hardy,1951).

Usually people of same class fall in love and later marry. In this regard Mohit K and Rama Kundu remark that, “A love affair or a marriage generally takes place among the individual of a same class of the society. But love / marriage is also possible by way of violating the so-called love laws and norms of the society. The social structure is affected in that way.” (Ray &Kundu, 2005).

Ethelberta accepts the proposal of Lord Mountclere. Towards the close of the story as her carriage passes by, her father Mr. Chickereel and brother Sol takes off their hats. Ethelberta responds to their salute with a tear in her eyes. In the world of Hardy matrimonial affairs are connected with social position. Mr. Chickereel knows that Ethelberta’s marriage is the result of her passion to better her class whereas personally it is most probable that she is not happy.

Hardy’s remarks are cutting and contemptuous. He refers to the two major social divisions and indicates the moral degradation amongst the higher order. He has diverse comments with reference to nuptial prospects. According to Delia Da Sousa Correa, “...one of the most immediate effects of mobility,

within a structure itself changing, is the difficult nature of the marriage choice ...” (Correa,2006).

In the nineteenth century development could be observed in all the fields of life. Similarly, the economic conditions of the families were improved. In the age of modernism, people while seeking necessary advantages were disregarding towards morality. This affected even marital arrangements which were then done on the basis of riches. Patricia Meyer Spacks says that, “As more money became available to more people, the fact affected marital arrangement...Now men in the process of aggrandizing their wealth might see the possibilities of using a daughter’s marriage to elevate the family’s social status ...” (Spacks,2006).

In *The Woodlanders* (1949) Hardy presents Grace, a girl in whose character we find fusion of modern nerves and primitive feelings. She is the center of her father’s attention. Her father Mr. Melbury educates her to rise in the world. After acquiring education, she returns to the little village of Hintock. Hardy shows that refinement is marked with inconvenience. Grace after acquiring education finds it difficult to adjust in the old environment. She ruefully bursts before her father that it would have been better if she had been an uneducated girl as her refinement is the cause of inconvenience for her. The following passage is marked with empathic significance on the part of the writer. Grace addresses her father in these words, “I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South! I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she! cultivation has only brought me, inconveniences and troubles”. (Hardy, 1949).

Later, Grace’s socially ambitious father wants to restore her to the social gathering she is separated from. He has high vision of her daughter’s fine prospects. Resultantly, Grace marries Fitzpiers, the doctor whose, “... family were Lords of the manor for... many hundred year”. (Hardy,1949). Fitzpier’s eyes are bedazzled for a while and he marries Grace, the daughter of a timber merchant. He, later on, condemns that he has blocked all the ways of progress because of his hasty marriage beneath his status. Doctor Fitzpiers and Barber Percomb are the ravishers. They deprive the Hintock women of their beauty both spiritual and physical. Fitzpiers represents modernity with his interest in science. He has that animal instinct given to carnal pleasures lacking respect for others sentiments. Mrs. Charmond is like Fitzpiers. She is a woman of perverse manners. Hardy shows that the sophisticated characters have deceptive appearances. He criticizes the ways of the upper class as petty selfish and exposes their fake appearances.

CONCLUSION

The Victorian fiction is dominated by class conflict. The eminent Victorians concentrated upon class conflict, class consciousness and satire on ruling class. The Victorian novelists focus upon the individual and his relationship with the environment.

The Victorian novel shows that how social setup affects individuals. It also highlights the relationship between individual and class. The British society was divided into classes. The distinction among the classes was made on the basis of education, work, riches and lineage. The Victorian people were grimly status conscious. Hardy's novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is a novel steeped in satire on social status. In the novel through Stephen's mother Hardy makes fun of the class conscious attitude of the Victorians. Addressing Stephen on the issue of marriage, she reveals that, "... Parsons marry squires' daughters; squires marry lords' daughters; lords marry dukes' daughters; dukes marry queens' daughters. All stages of gentlemen mate a stage higher, and the lowest stage of gentlewomen are left single, or marry out of their class!"(Hardy,1985)..Hardy being the son of a stonemason improved his social status by the dint of his education and marriage in the upper class .Though he improved his social status yet he always remained conscious about his humble origin. In his novels he targets the elite section as immoral, hypocritical and insensitive.

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