

Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho: Contrasting Visions of Human Condition



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Dedicated to my father

Who persuaded me to pursue my studies in
the field of English language and literature.

ABSTRACT

Title: Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho: Contrasting Visions of Human Condition

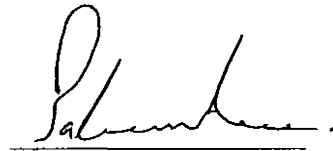
In Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho's fictional works, human condition is one of the major themes as both of them, in their novels, have delineated and interpreted human condition in the cosmic order. However, in this regard they have contrasting views. This research is a comparative study in which the visions of human condition of both the novelists have been compared and contrasted by delimiting focus on the selected novels. The novels that have been selected for the study are: *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Hardy; and *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir* by Coelho. In order to highlight the characteristics of their visions regarding human predicament, existentialist framework is used. Their views regarding human condition in the world, deduced from the selected works, are juxtaposed to bring to light the similarities and the differences that are existent between their visions. The objective of the research is to enhance readers' understanding of the issue of human condition and facilitate the students of literature to understand Hardy and Coelho's works by studying them comparatively since they are foils to each other.

DECLARATION

I, Saleem Akhtar Khan son of Muhammad Aslam Khan, Registration # 144-FLL/MSENG/ F09, student of MS, in the discipline of English Literature, do hereby declare that the matter printed in the thesis “Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho: Contrasting Visions of Human Condition” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MS degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

This work was carried out and completed at International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.



Signatures of Deponent

SALEEM AKHTAR KHAN

Dated: December 16, 2011

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Thro' the world we safely go.
(William Blake)

1.1 The Problem of Human Condition

“Human Condition” has always been one of the major concerns of literatures around the world. A number of eminent writers have displayed this self-reflexive approach and endeavoured to delineate and interpret human life within the cosmic scheme of things. Every one of them has done so in his or her idiosyncratic manner and there is an iridescence of ideas about the nature of human condition in the world. However, the nature of the riddle of human existence is such that no one could claim to have resolved it. Human predicament continues to be a complex, puzzling and bewildering issue. People are still striving to know the meaning and nature of existence and, if it is not possible, then at least to assign it some kind of meaning. Some of these writers have failed to find or assign any meaning to life and they have become obsessed with the absurdity and pointlessness of human life and some of them have found the meaning of life, rather they have supposed that they have found the meaning of life. But despite the fact that there are differences in their approaches towards the nature and meaning of human life, there is a unifying theme, the theme of human condition, which

develops a connection among them. This anthropocentric approach and pursuit of human beings to know, represent and interpret human condition have produced a lot of rich and profound literature.

There are many great writers throughout the world like Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Samuel Beckett, Naguib Mahfooz, Dr Iqbal, and others, who have discussed in their writings the issues relating to human condition. Their works about existence include both the creative and the critical ones. Some of the critical works are the elaboration of the ideas presented in the creative works and some others are independent philosophical treatises about existence. These works have profoundly influenced people throughout the world and helped them to be attentive to their existence. These scholars have inculcated in the minds of people the fact that humanity itself is the greatest subject to be explained and understood. They have importuned that the question regarding human condition is the most momentous one for humanity. The significance and the influence of these writers cannot be ignored because they are the people who are responsible for the provision of psychological relief to human beings. They have awakened people from their slumber of ignorance and led them from the chaotic world of purposelessness to the world of possibilities.

Some of these writers, like Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus, have drawn pessimistic conclusions after their contemplation of the situation. They have presented man as an impotent entity subjected to undeserved afflictions. Contrary to the optimist group of writers, these pessimists have imparted the message of passivity and inaction to their readership. Their writings are not invigorating in nature rather they have a benumbing impact upon readers.

From the assemblage of writers, who have written about human condition, Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho have been chosen for this study. Both the writers have presented their peculiar interpretations of human condition. For this study, two novels of each novelist have been taken. All these novels are representatives of their authors' views about human life in this universe.

1.2 Hardy's Vision of Human Condition

Hardy (1840-1927) is considered to be one of the greatest novelists among the later Victorians. He has a peculiar view about the nature of human existence and his novels embody his philosophy of life. His *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are taken for this study.

The Return of the Native is the novel that has been considered to be "unique in Hardy's fiction" (Harvey 2003: 66). It is a tragic story that relates how nature controls life of human beings and how it conspires against them. In the novel, Clym Yeobright, the hero, and Eustacia Vye, the heroine, are presented as mere victims of fate who are spending their miserable life in the cruel clutch of it. They try their best to emancipate themselves from the stranglehold of nature but in vain. Nature subjects them to unbearable torments and makes their lives wretched. Egdon Heath, a symbol of the tyranny of nature, plays a crucial role in this story of human conflicts, coincidences and destruction. The novel is an acute study of human condition that communicates Hardy's philosophy of determinism and his pessimistic approach.

The other novel of Hardy, selected for the study, is *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. It has been described as "beyond doubt the greatest of the Wessex novels" (Duffin 1991:

58). It is a tale of seduction, destruction, miseries, and human beings' helplessness and vulnerability. The novel narrates life history of an innocent and charming girl, Tess, and tells how her life becomes a curse for her after being seduced by Alec D'Urbervilles and deserted by her husband, Angel Clare. The seduction of this *impeccable* and *guiltless* girl, which entails numerous other calamities, is the theme of the novel. This novel, also, is an expression of Hardy's stance about the nature of human existence.

Both the novels evince Hardy's tragic vision and hold forth his gloomy outlook. The events that are narrated and the characters that are portrayed conspicuously manifest his philosophy of life. The whole fabric of these novels is the outcome of his tragic bent of mind. Briefly, in these novels, he has enunciated his vision of human condition and itemized assorted afflictions that enmesh humanity.

1.3 Paulo Coelho and His Cosmic Vision

Paulo Coelho, the Brazilian novelist, is the other writer whose vision can be compared and contrasted with that of Hardy. He is one of the most widely read novelists of the modern world whose works are being translated to numerous languages and being welcomed all over the world. He is a prolific writer but only two of his novels are selected for this study: *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir*.

The Alchemist is one of the most acclaimed works of Coelho. It is a fabulous story of an Andalusian boy, Santiago, who embarks upon a long journey in search of a buried treasure in Egypt that is indicated to him in his dreams. He explores several foreign places in order to reach his destination. After a lot of straggling, he meets the alchemist who guides him, in a mysterious manner, towards his goal. At last, after

getting full awareness of the secrets of nature and realizing his true self, he stands triumphant and procures the treasure. The novel is about the importance and significance of following one's dreams courageously. It is an expression of the author's belief in the beneficence of nature. It is a great source of hope and aspiration for the people who have courage to follow their dreams.

The Zahir, a story that imparts hope and courage to its readers to overcome and endure the hardships and difficulties, is the other novel of Coelho selected for this study. It is the story of an unnamed person whose wife, Esther, has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. He gets obsessed with the recollections of his wife who becomes his *Zahir*, the word that metaphorically stands for "someone or something which, once we have come into contact with them or it, gradually occupies our every thought, until we can think of nothing else" (Coelho 2005: 2). The novel recounts his search for his wife that makes him itinerate from one country to the other. During his journey, he decides to become conscious of his own reality before finding his wife. He successfully achieves self-realization and carries on his journey to find his wife. His effort comes to fruition and he discovers his wife. The realization of one's self, power of love and the fruitfulness of human efforts are the major themes of this novel.

Coelho's novels, like Hardy's, demonstrate his vision of human condition. But his vision is not like Hardy's tragic vision; he takes life as a boon and blessing. For him, life is not a sheer failure instead he believes it to be a path of success and triumph. His picture of human life is luminous and resplendent, because he paints life in bright colours.

1.4 Comparison and Contrast of Hardy and Coelho's Visions

In these novels, both the novelists take up the issue of human condition. In spite of some similarities like their philanthropic attitudes, by and large, they have contrasting views about human predicament. Hardy has depicted the seamy side of human life while Coelho has presented the bright side of it. In this study the ideas of both these writers about the nature of human condition are compared and contrasted and this comparison of the ideas is the major theme of the study. Since the comparison of these writers is based on the theme of *human condition*, existentialist framework is wielded because the issue belongs to the domain of existentialism. For example, the issue of *free will* holds an essential position in the existentialist philosophy. As Mary Warnock says:

So, it is necessary to add that for Existentialists, uniquely, the problem of freedom in a sense a practical problem. They aim, above all, to show people that they are free, to open their eyes to something which has always been true, but which for one reason or other may not always have been recognized, namely that men are free to choose, not only what to do on a specific occasion, but what to value and how to live.

(1971:1, 2)

The statement conspicuously asserts that the notion of free will is an essential tenet of existentialist thinkers. It is their aim to make people aware of their freedom and to provoke them to live in accordance with their desires. On the issue of free will, Hardy's and Coelho's ideas are in sharp contrast. Hardy is an opinionated fatalist and determinist. He considers that human beings are mere victims of super human forces and takes human efforts for the attainment of happiness in their lives as absurd and pointless. On the contrary, Coelho believes that human beings are free to choose and do whatever they want and whenever they want. So, both the novelists have contrasting views about the problem of free will, a major concept in the philosophy of existentialism.¹ In this way, the

visions of these two novelists are compared and contrasted in the light of the views of the existentialist philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jasper, Gabriel Marcel, Maurice Merleau Ponty, Jean Paul Sartre and others.

To sum up, it is a comparative study in which Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition are compared and contrasted, on the basis of their selected novels, from existentialist perspective. The similarities and the differences that exist between their delineation and interpretation of human condition are made explicit. Especially, Hardy's pessimistic disposition concerning human condition is contrasted with Paulo Coelho's optimistic approach with reference to human life. Also the augmentative impact of the study on the understanding of readers, the rationale and *raison d'être* for the study, is highlighted.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Thomas Hardy's vision of human condition is diametrically opposed and is in sharp contrast to that of Paulo Coelho. In terms of the problem of human condition, Hardy has a tragic vision as compared to Paulo Coelho who approaches this problem from a more optimistic perspective.

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What is human condition and how creative writers have tried to understand the meaning of human existence?
- ii. What are the similarities and the differences between Hardy's and Coelho's delineation of human existence?

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

It is not possible to cover all the novels of both the writers in this particular study. So, the researcher has confined himself to the selected works. For this purpose, two novels of each writer are selected to be analyzed and compared in this study:

- i. Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.
- ii. Coelho's *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir*.

Only the extracts regarding human condition have been focused in the study as the basis for comparison and contrast of the writers' vision.

1.8 Methodology of the Study

Since the study is a qualitative and comparative one, it is descriptive in nature. It belongs to the field of comparative literature² where literary works are compared and contrasted to make the meanings of works clear by looking the works side by side. In the field of comparative literature, there are many theoretical frameworks and methodological designs for the purpose of comparison and contrast of texts, philosophies, styles, structures etc. There are many schools of comparative literature, but this study is more akin to British School of comparative literature that is a less developed school of comparative literature.³ Susan Bassnett, describing the quintessence of British comparative literature, says:

Probably the most original contribution of British comparative literature is the concept of 'placing', the juxtaposing of texts in order to create new readings across cultures. Siegbert Praver defines placing as: The mutual illumination of several texts, or series of texts,

considered side by side; the greater understanding we derive from juxtaposing a number of (frequently very different) works, authors and literary traditions. (1993: 42)

The passage explains the nature of British comparative literature that it is concerned with juxtaposition, comparison and contrast of similar or different kinds of texts. The description shows the importance and role of *juxtaposing* or *placing* of texts in the process of understanding and comprehension.

The basis of comparison in this study is philosophical because existentialist framework is used as a basis of comparison and contrast. The purpose of the research is to study the theme of human condition with reference to the selected novels of Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho and to make explicit the similarities and the differences between them to get better understanding of human existence. This theme, the study of human condition, is one of the basic themes of comparative literature. As, referring to the five subjects and themes of comparative literature mentioned by Siegbert Praver, Susan Bassnett says:

Siegbert Praver devotes a whole chapter of his book on comparative literature to a discussion of what he calls 'themes and prefiguration'. He determines five different subjects of investigation, which include 1) the literary representation of natural phenomena or what he calls 'perennial human problems and patterns of behaviour'; 2) recurring motifs; 3) recurrent situations; 4) the literary representation of types; 5) the literary representation of named personages. (1993: 116)

This categorization of themes makes explicit the point that to study problems concerning humanity is one of the major themes of comparative literature and this study is an attempt to understand the problem of human *being* by comparing Hardy's and Coelho's weltanschauungs.

This is the reason for the adoption of existentialist framework as the basis for the comparison and contrast. This framework is more appropriate⁴ to deal with the problems concerning human condition and existence because the existentialists are the thinkers who consider the study of human beings and human condition as their major concern. Mary Warnock points out this fact in these words: "They are all interested in the world considered as the environment of man, who is treated as a unique object of attention, because of his power to choose his own course of action" (1971: 1). She has stated the importance of man for existentialists without mincing the matter and made the point clear that the existentialist thinkers take humanity as the subject of their investigation.

So, the methodology adopted for the research is eclectic one. Firstly, the selected texts of both the writers are analyzed from existentialist perspective. For this purpose, two studies are taken as the models to be followed: Dr. Anita Singh's *Existential Dimensions in the Novels of Anita Desai* (2008) and Prof. Niaz Erfan's *Iqbal: Existentialism and Other Articles* (1997). Both of these studies analyze the targeted texts from existentialist perspective and bring forth the existential features present in the texts. In this study, the method of these two critical works is adopted to seek existentialist dimensions in the selected works. Secondly, the writers' visions of human condition, emanated by the existentialist analyses of their works, are compared in compliance with the method of comparison outlined by Susan Bassnett in her *Comparative Literature* (1998).

This is the methodology that is used to compare and contrast Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition. First of all, both the writers are taken individually and their selected works are criticized from existentialist perspective. The textual

extracts from their selected novels, regarding human condition and existence, are taken and analyzed by focusing on existentialist dimensions. Then, their visions, deduced from their selected works by existentialist analysis, are compared and contrasted to point out the similarities and the dissimilarities between them.

1.9 Chapter Division

The thesis is divided into following chapters:

Chapter 1

Introduction: The introductory chapter gives the problem of human condition, Hardy's vision of human condition, Paulo Coelho and his cosmic vision, comparison and contrast of Hardy's and Coelho's visions, statement of the problem, research questions, delimitation of the study, methodology of the study, chapter division, and significance of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Important relevant literature regarding human condition with reference to existentialism, Hardy's tragic vision, and Coelho's optimistic approach towards existence has been reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Depiction of Human Condition in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*: In this chapter Hardy's pessimistic approach towards human existence, the issue of free will and determinism, exploration of the problem of Sartrean facticity, Hardy's humanism, the destructive nature of love in human life, the expression of

anguish, the theme of seeking self, and negation of the concept of poetic justice have been discussed with reference to the selected novels.

Chapter 4

Treatment of the Theme of Human Condition in Coelho's *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir*: In this chapter Coelho's optimistic weltanschauung, belief in free will, venture for self-actualization, love's constructive character, emphasis on concrete experience, subjectivity and pluralism, philanthropic frame of mind, and corroboration of the existence of poetic justice have been critically examined with reference to his "*The Alchemist*" and "*The Zahir*".

Chapter 5

Comparison of Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho's Visions of Human Condition: Description of the similarities and the differences between the visions of human condition of the two writers by juxtaposing their visions is the theme of this chapter.

Conclusion: In this portion of the study, the whole discussion is summed up and conclusion is drawn.

1.10 Significance of the Study

The study is a significant one from multifarious perspectives. Firstly, the researcher hopes that the study helps the readers to understand the nature of human existence. Since the modern human being is eager to grasp the nature of his/her existence to satisfy his/her questioning soul that pricks him/her, the research helps him/her to understand human's condition in the world. It provides him/her with an opportunity to establish a balanced view by synthesizing these antithetical visions of human condition of these two writers and find redemption for his/her anxiety. From this perspective, the research is not only relevant to the students of English literature but also for every human being who wants to understand the enigmatic and perplexing nature of human existence.

Secondly, the study attempts to enhance the understanding and sharpen the literary curiosity of the students of English Literature at BS and MA level at Pakistani universities because Thomas Hardy is a part of syllabi at almost all the universities of Pakistan. It shows the existentialist facet of Hardy to the students of English literature. It is easier for them to appreciate Hardy by studying him in comparison with Coelho who is a foil to Hardy. The study is useful also for the general readers of English literature because Hardy is a canonical writer who is widely read by people.

Thirdly, the study helps to understand the fiction of Paulo Coelho whose works belong to one of the most fascinating genres in literature, the genre of pop-fiction. He is being read all over the world but there is a dearth of critical material on him. The study helps readers to develop a critique of him by analyzing his works seriously instead of going through them casually to kill time. His comparison with Hardy makes his readers

study his works critically and find new dimensions in them. So, the study is a valuable contribution to the critical material on Coelho.

Finally, the study is helpful for the readers to comprehend existentialist philosophy and the literary works that are written by, or under the influence of, the existentialist philosophers. The study is an application of the existentialist philosophy on literary works. It presents this philosophical paradigm in an applied form, viz., applied to the selected works, which is useful for the understanding of the features and characteristics of existentialism.

For the above mentioned reasons, the researcher hopes that the study is a significant and beneficial one for its readers.

Notes

1. In the introduction, only the contents are being introduced. The textual references to substantiate the statements about nature of the visions of both the writers will be given in the following chapters.
2. At present, the discipline of comparative literature is on decline. The problem is discussed by Spivak in one of her books. She states in the preface of her book: "I hope that the book will be read as the last gasp of dying discipline" (Spivak 2003: xii).
3. Other more developed schools of comparative literature are: American School of comparative literature, French School of comparative literature and German School of comparative literature.
4. There are some other frameworks like Postcolonial framework, Marxist framework etc. that study human condition. But existentialist framework is more appropriate since it does not politicize the issue and take it on human level while the other frameworks tend to handle the theme of human condition from political perspective.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study revolves around three basic issues: human condition with reference to existentialism, Hardy's tragic vision, and Coelho's optimistic approach towards human existence. Therefore, in this chapter, I review the relevant critical literature about these key issues.

2.1 Human Condition with Reference to Existentialism

Existentialist approach towards life has been prevalent since the last century. Particularly, it flourished in post-war era. Existentialism is, as its name shows, the philosophy that is concerned with study of the nature of human existence and condition. The term existentialism is defined as: "Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of condition and existence of man, his place and function in the world, and his relation, or lack of one, with God" (Cuddon 1999: 294). This is the hallmark of existentialism that it has avoided all kinds of abstruse and metaphysical speculation and made *being* the subject of its investigation, a fact that distinguishes it from the other schools of philosophy.

A lot of work has been done in this field that can not be reviewed in this study. So, I am compelled to be selective while reviewing the available literature. The books reviewed, regarding existentialism, for this study are listed below in chronological order:

1. Heidegger. *Being and Time*. (1927) Trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).
2. Jean Paul Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. (1943) Trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen and Co. LTD, 1986).
3. Jean Paul Sartre. *Existentialism and Humanism*. (1946) Trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen and Co. LTD, 1957).
4. Marjorie Greene. *Introduction to Existentialism* (The University of Chicago Press, 1948).
5. Wilfrid Desan. *The Tragic Finale: An Essay on the Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre* (Harvard University Press, 1954).
6. John A. Hutchison. *Faith, Reason, and Existence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).
7. F. H. Heinemann. *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957).
8. H. J. Blackham. *The Six Existentialist Thinkers* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959).
9. Eugene F. Kaelin. *An Existentialist Aesthetic* (USA: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).
10. Mary Warnock. *Existentialism* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

11. Christian Howells. *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
12. Stephen Mulhall. *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Heidegger's views have played a foundational role in the development of the existentialist philosophy. His book, *Being and Time* (1927), is a milestone in the philosophical sphere that "addresses itself to nothing less than movement, the question of Being itself— more particularly, to that mode of being which is specifically human" (Eagleton 1998: 53, 54). Mulhall's work *Heidegger and Being and Time* (2001) is an introduction and critical appreciation of Heidegger's masterpiece. He has extensively elaborated Heidegger's ideas and showed the pivotal role played by these ideas in the development of the existentialist interpretation of life. Mulhall concisely describes Heidegger's own conclusion about the nature of his "phenomenological investigation" that "it provides the most fundamental understanding that he has been able to develop of the nature of human existence" (2001: 191). The crucial point of Heidegger's philosophy is that he has not drawn any conclusions based on his speculation. Rather, he has just opened a debate about human existence and urged his readers to ponder over their condition. Mulhall states the point:

In other words, an important part of his reason for concluding *Being and Time* with a question might well be that it constitute a rebuke to its readers, a way of warning his would-be followers against relying upon him to provide all the answers they seek in their philosophical investigations... (2002:195)

Summarily, he has shown the way that leads to the destination of understanding one's being instead of showing the destination itself. So, Heidegger's aim is not to give

formulas for the solution of human enigmas instead he tries to instigate his reader to pay attention to their existence. He himself has pondered over the problem and asked other people to do so and seek the solution of problems pertaining to their being.

Although the origin of the existentialist philosophy is to be found in the ideas of Kierkegaard, the greatest surge of existentialist thought flowed with the emergence of Jean Paul Sartre on the scene. To understand existentialism, it is necessary to comprehend Sartre's views, the person who is "widely known as a leader in the movement" (Kaelin 1966: 14). He stands head and shoulders above among all existentialist philosophers. His book *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is one of the groundbreaking works in the field and considered to be "a text-book of existentialism".¹ The main focus of the book is on the study of man's predicament in the world.² It explains the tenets of existentialism: being, nothingness, temporality, freedom, facticity etc.

Another work of him, *Existentialism and Humanism*³ (1946), is a seminal one in the field of the existentialist philosophy. Existentialist philosophy has been subjected to constant misinterpretations by people who are unaware even of its rudiments. This book is a defense, justification and elaboration of existentialist's stance of human condition. In the book, Sartre rebuts certain allegations against existentialism. The optimistic nature of the philosophy is also asserted in this book. It nullifies and uproots the objections and asserts that the existentialist philosophy neither spreads the feeling of despondency nor ignores the brighter side of human nature. So, the book is a polemic one in its nature and counters the objections of opponents.

Sartre's appearance was the emanation of the secular facet of the existentialist philosophy. After him, whosoever wrote anything about the philosophical paradigm was bound to give priority to Sartre's ideas. For example, when Marjorie Greene wrote her *Introduction to Existentialism* (1948), she discussed the issue from the secular perspective and defined existentialism as "the philosophy which declares as its first principle that existence is prior to essence" (1948: 1). This definition clearly exhibits her affinity to Sartre's version of existentialism because she has accepted the priority of existence to essence.

Myriads of books were written to explain Sartrean ideas about the complex nature of existence. Desan's study *The Tragic Finale: An Essay on the Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre* (1954), belongs to this category and presents an authentic critique of Sartre's philosophy. He considers all the pros and cons of Sartre's philosophy and declares that "he was the victim of a one-sided and subjective approach" (1954: 209). He sums up the discussion thus: "Sartre does not intend to alter the conclusions of his Ontology. Its tragic conclusions remain unshaken; human reality is and continues a failure" (1954: 209,210). In short, he has analyzed all the aspects of Sartre's philosophy and pointed out its merits and faults.

But it could not be supposed that the religious facet of existentialist philosophy was totally neglected. Thinkers kept on showing their affiliations with the theistic version of the philosophy. Hutchison's study (1956) is representative of this school of thought. In the study, man is taken as "a question to be answered or a potentiality to be realized" (1956: 65). Man's condition is discussed by considering his relation with God and religion. The role of religion and faith in human life is elaborated. Shortly, the study

is an exploration of the religious or theistic facet of existentialism.

After the abrupt climax of Existentialism, there stood some writers who proposed that the heyday of that mode of philosophy was gone and there was a little room for it to flourish. Heinnemann's study *Existentialism and the Modern Predicament* (1957) is a critique of existentialism that approaches the issue from this angle. The study analytically presents the views of prominent existentialist thinkers of the twentieth century with most of whom the author claims to have been personally intimated. It also suggests the fall of existentialism and predicts the emergence of post-existentialist epoch.

When the bulk of material available about existentialism became vast, the efforts were made by critics to give it a coherent shape. Blackham's *The Six Existentialist Thinkers* (1959) is one of those works in which an attempt has been made to describe the views of some major existentialist thinker with lucidity. It is a comprehensive book that succinctly presents crux of the ideas of the six most prominent existentialist thinkers: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, and Sartre. This work concisely encompasses salient ideas of some of the existentialist philosophers whose influence "has not been slight" (Blackham 1959: 165). Summarily, it covers polychromatic ideas ranging from Kierkegaard, a theist existentialist, to Sartre, an atheist existentialist.

Kaelin tries to acquaint his reader with Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's ideas by putting them vis-à-vis. In his *An Existentialist Aesthetic* (1966), he compares and contrasts Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's theories to clarify certain obscurities by juxtaposing them. He approaches existentialism, a committed philosophy, from the perspective of aesthetics, a discipline that is ambiguous in nature and without any

definitely demarcated domain. While commenting upon the purpose of philosophy, he asserts that “philosophers must be brought to realize that their special area of technical competence can be applied to the solution of the problems arising in the lives of men” (1966: 13). This book traces “the development of French existentialistic aesthetics from the appearance of Sartre *L’Imagination* in 1936 to the publication of Merleau-Ponty’s *Les Aventures de la dialectique* in 1955” (Kaelin 1966: 332). So, the study comparatively analyzes the gradual development of Sartre’s and Ponty’s views about existence.

An essential factor about the existentialist thinkers is that despite their unidirectional approach, their focus on existence, they have not the same kind of views about the nature of existence.⁴ This diversity and variety of thoughts is precisely and pithily introduced by Warnock in her book *Existentialism* (1971). In this study, the ideas of the most influential figures in the domain of the existentialist philosophy are briefly stated and commented upon. Warnock has also mentioned certain characteristics, freedom being one of those, which are common among all existentialists. She has identified that a unanimous methodology is used by them. She says in this respect: “none except Existentialists have developed the peculiar methodology, which, far more than their common subject matter, seems to me to unite them into a recognizable ‘school’ of philosophy” (1971: 132, 133). She has termed this methodology as “Concrete Imagination” and has defined it as “a perfectly and intentional use of the *concrete* as a way of approaching the abstract, the *particular* as a way of approaching the general” (1971: 133). Perception of this methodology is very helpful for the understanding of existentialist thought. At the end of her book, she has blatantly dismissed existentialists’ “subjective anti-scientific dogmatism” (1971: 140).

Howell's book, *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (1999), is a collection of critical essays on Sartre's philosophy. It contains the articles of different scholars who have elaborated Sartre's philosophy with reference to phenomenology, existentialism, psychology, ethics, history, and structure. In this book, Peter Caws' article, *Sartrean Structuralism* (1999: 293), is very significant, in which he has identified some latent similarities between Sartre's and the structuralists' ideas because, apparently, their ideas seem to be in sheer contrast. Briefly, this book is very beneficial for the perception of Sartre's views.

A microscopic review of the available material enables to detect certain features of existentialist philosophy that constitute its superstructure. The statement made by E. F. Kaelin about Maurice Merleau Ponty's philosophy can be taken as representative of all the existentialist thinkers. He, encapsulating the gist of Merleau Ponty's philosophy in one sentence, proclaims: "For him, to philosophize was to criticize the conditions of life" (1966: xiv). The statement clearly mentions the importance of the study of human condition for the existentialist thinkers.

One of the most significant tenets of the existentialist thinkers is their belief in the notion of free will. They consider man as a free and independent entity. As Mary Warnock states: "Many writers on Existentialism see it as, above all, an exploration of human freedom, and a statement of the autonomy of the individual human being" (1971: 132). They believe "that man is only what he does, and has no substance or essence..." (Blackham 1959: 162). These philosophers consider that human beings can improve their predicament and give meaning to their absurd existence by using their free will and potentialities. Otherwise, they are doomed to move like rudderless boats and face the

absurdity that enervates them and engulf the happiness of their lives.

Previously, philosophy was concerned with conceptual and theoretical affairs. As Maritain, defining the term philosophy, says: "Philosophy is not 'wisdom' of conduct or practical life that consists in acting well. It is a wisdom whose nature consists essentially in *knowing*" (2005: 56). But the existentialist thinkers have relinquished the abstract speculation, which has been the Achilles' heel of other philosophical paradigms, and propounded a practical philosophy about human predicament. In the words of Mary Warnock:

Moreover, as we have seen, existentialist's theoretical disinclination to distinguish between knowing, feeling, and acting, in addition to the initially shocking and missionary spirit which enlivened the writings of Kierkegaard, all contributed to the view, quite properly held, that Existentialist philosophy constituted, at least in part, a practical and politically useful programme. (1971: 132)

The quotation clearly expresses the applied nature of existentialism. Existentialism has made philosophy a persuasive one, that urges people to move and act to find the meaning and purpose of their existence, instead of being a mere intellectual activity which brings no practical change in human beings' lives.

The concept of subjectivity is also one of the key concepts in existentialist philosophical paradigm. Kierkegaard, the father of existentialist philosophy, takes truth and reality to be subjective and concrete entities. Mary Warnock, with reference to Kierkegaard, says: "Subjectivity and concreteness of truth are together the light. Anyone who is committed to science, or to ruled-governed morality, is benighted, and needs to be rescued from his state of darkness" (1971: 12). The concept negates the possibility of any universal or objective reality and suggests the relative nature of truth.

The concept is an assertion of individual freedom and it importunes every individual to live his or her life in accordance with personal standards. Tolerance is a prerequisite in this respect because without it the belief in individuality cannot sustain. H. J Blackham explains the fact:

Not the least virtue of this existentialist theory or affirmation at this time is the leaven of tolerance which it introduces. The liberty of all is implied by and is necessary to the liberty of each. The concern is to awaken each to his liberty, not to convert him to a doctrine.

(1959: 160)

The quotation expounds that the existentialists want to engender a tolerant society without any radicalism. This attitude of them makes them appear as the precursors of post-modern philosophy, another overwhelming philosophical paradigm since the last quarter of the previous century which holds tolerance and pluralism to be its watch-words.

Human life is full of contradictions and paradoxes and the existentialist philosophy accepts the ambivalence in human nature, instead of trying to resolve or diminish these contradictions. H. J. Blackham discusses the point in these words:

In sum, then, existentialism is in contrast with other philosophies in its insistence on the ambiguity arising out of fundamental structural discontinuities. The characteristic attempt of philosophy to reduce the discontinuities is rejected, in evolutionary naturalism with its doctrine of emergence and refusal of reduction not less than in a monastic materialism or idealism. The discontinuities are existential and have to be lived, they are not problem for thought. (1959: 160)

This emphasis on co-existence and acceptance of the absurdities of human nature is a kind of compromise offered by the existentialists to avoid the devastating consequences that essentialism has brought in past and likely to bring in future.

Every human being has to face certain obstacles in his life that hinder and obstruct the course of his action. These obstacles are termed as *facticity* by Sartre. Wilfrid Desan explains the term in these words:

The whole set of obstacles which freedom has to face is designated by Sartre under the denomination "facticity". It includes five "facts" or data, namely: my *place*, my *past*, my *surroundings*, my *fellow-brethren*, my *death*. (1954: 107)

Man is faced with these five hindrances that obstruct and distract him. An individual has to cope with these hurdles to live in freedom according to his personal will. Without surpassing these hurdles, man can not enjoy his right of being free to choose his course of action.

The feeling of anguish is also a main issue in this philosophical paradigm. The existentialist philosophers have explained anguish and distinguished it from fear. After comparing Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's concepts of anguish, Sartre concludes: "First we must acknowledge that Kierkegaard is right; anguish is distinguished from fear in that fear is fear of beings in the world whereas anguish is anguish before myself" (1986: 29). He has preferred Kierkegaard's view of anguish over Heidegger's and provided arguments to justify it.

The above review has made the fact clear that to study human condition and leave all other things aside is the hallmark of the existentialist philosophy. The existentialist philosophers present human beings as free creatures who can create meanings out of prevailing absurdity and pointlessness. To make every individual aware of his freedom is the motto of existentialism. One thing is very obvious that when the existentialist philosophers become obsessed with the absurdity of existence and talk of anguish they do

not want to make human beings passive instead they make them aware of these facts so that they could be able to use their free will to get out of the miserable situation. They have made philosophy a practical one, the quality that differentiates them from other philosophers, and human issues like subjectivity, tolerance, freedom, anguish, and others, the focal points of their meditation and investigation.

2.2 Hardy's Tragic Vision

Hardy's works have been one of the focal points of critics since his appearance on the literary scene. His multidimensional contributions to literature have invoked a host of critics to criticize his works. The necessity of review of the previous critical material on Hardy cannot be dissented and "anyone investigating the reception of Hardy's work must be conscious of how much has been done for him by earlier scholars" (Cox 1970: xi). But the complication is that "all this material adds up to a formidable bulk and any selection must involve compromises" (Cox 1970: xiii). Therefore, first I list chronologically all the books and articles available to me about Hardy's tragic vision:

1. Harold Child. *Thomas Hardy* (London: Nisbet and Co. LTD, 1925).
2. David Cecil. *Hardy the Novelist* (London: Constable and Co. LTD, 1954).
3. Roy Morrell. *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965).
4. R. G. Cox. Ed. *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1970).
5. Harold Bloom. Ed. *Thomas Hardy* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers,

1987).

6. Harold Bloom. Ed. *Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).
7. Harold Bloom. Ed. *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).
8. Harold Orel. *The Unknown Thomas Hardy* (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1987).
9. Peter Widdowson. *Hardy in History* (London: Routledge, 1989).
10. F. B. Pinion. *Hardy the Writer: Surveys and Assessments* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1990).
11. Henry Charles Duffin. *Thomas Hardy* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991).
12. Merryn Williams. *A Preface to Hardy* (London: Longman, 1993).
13. Jane Thomas. *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1999).
14. Norman Page. *Thomas Hardy* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).
15. Geoffrey Harvey. *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge, 2003).
16. Phillip Mallett. Ed. *Palgrave Advances in Thomas Hardy Studies* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2004).

Hardy's art and his philosophy of life are critically analyzed, with reference to his fiction and poetry, by critics and his tragic vision has been the major concern of them.

Child's *Thomas Hardy* (1925) is one of the pioneering works on Hardy. Describing the important position that is held by philosophy in Hardy's works, he clearly asserts that "philosophy is the foundation upon which all his work is built" (1925: 11). He has discussed Hardy's artistic purpose, his novels, and his poetry. He has explained Hardy's view of the world by comparing it with that of Greeks. The world of Hardy's novels, according to him, is "a world in which human individuality and desire are always in the conflict with the indifferent governing power, just as in much Greek tragedy human individuality and desire are in conflict with fate, or the gods, or custom" (1925: 18). He has identified not only pessimistic strains in Hardy's works but also humanitarianism and presented a balanced view of Hardy's vision of human condition by taking his humanism as a palliative for his pessimism.

Most of the critics have concentrated their attention only upon Hardy's novels and analyzed them minutely to bring forth the essentials of his philosophy of life. Cecil's *Hardy the Novelist* (1954) is a pivotal work in this respect that studies the scope, power, nature of art, and weaknesses of Hardy's novels. He declares, hinting at the crux of Hardy's fiction: "his theme is mankind's predicament in this universe" (1954: 19). The clash between humanity and nonchalant fate, according to Cecil, "is Hardy's interpretation of human situation" (1954: 26). He has expressed the kernel of his analysis of Hardy's personality and Hardy's conception of life in one sentence: "Bitter and hard as he conceived life to be, Hardy himself was never hard, nor, save in a rare impulse of exasperation, was he bitter" (1954: 156, 157). His critique has been considered a kind of touchstone for the readers of Hardy.

Roy Morrell, in his *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (1965), has shown

dissent for the earlier critical approaches towards Hardy's philosophy. He insisted that the roots of tragedy, in the world created by Hardy in his literary works, are to be found in the social system. There is no need, according to him, to incriminate fate or any other supernatural force for humanity's miserable condition. His critical approach has, in words of Jane Thomas, "marked a watershed in Hardy criticism" (Thomas 1999: 1). His is an untraditional critique of Hardy that unravels the sociological causes of tragic situation of characters in Hardy's works.

Some scholars have compiled anthologies in which critical articles of various critics, about Hardy's works, are accumulated. Cox's study *Thomas Hardy: the Critical Heritage* (1970) is an anthology of critical articles about Hardy. The compiler has acknowledged the richness of critical material on Hardy and declared that the effort has been made to include the representative material about Hardy's life, novels, poetry, and the context in which his works are produced. This work constitutes an authentic source of information and is almost an indispensable resort for the readers of Hardy who wants to be acquainted with the critics' views about him. He has arranged all the articles chronologically so that the readers are made able to grasp the gradual and systematic development of the critical substance.

Bloom's three works, *Thomas Hardy* (1987), *Thomas Hardy's The Return of the Native* (1987), and *Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1987), are the anthologies of articles arranged in chronological order, like that of Cox, about Hardy and his selected novels which contain the articles of miscellaneous prominent critics. The first book contains articles about Hardy's ideas and works in general without specifying any particular work. But the two later ones are the delimited studies: one takes *The Return*

of the *Native* as its object of investigation and the other contains articles only about *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The introduction by Bloom himself, which is in the beginning of all the three books, is very informative and helpful to develop a basis for the proper understanding of Hardy's works. Bloom has concentrated upon the modern criticism of Hardy and left the traditional material about him.

There are some critics who have deviated from the traditional interpretation of Hardy and approached him from their peculiar perspective. Orel's study *The Unknown Thomas Hardy* (1987), one of the unconventional studies, describes Hardy's life with its emphasis on commonly unfamiliar aspects of his personality. He considers his architectural acumen, his considerations for theatre and law, his amity with literary personalities, and his interest in developing sciences. These aspects of Hardy's personality, according to Orel, are neglected by readers and critics. Thus, his emphasis is on the marginalized dimensions of Hardy's genius that makes his study different from other studies on Hardy. He has considered philosophical attitude of Hardy and concluded that "the intellectual excitement created by increasingly serious investigators in several hard sciences" is responsible for the shaping of his "specific philosophy" (1987: 169).

Widdowson's study (1989) is, according to the author himself, a reaction against the established view of Hardy. The study is an expression of the fact how critics arbitrarily impose certain identification upon writers and make their peculiar profiles. It is as kind of revolt against literary dictators and the art of critiquing. Describing the purpose of his study, Widdowson says:

My readings of *Life* and *The Hand of Ethelberta* were intended to break the frame in which that critical picture is mounted, and to set up

another perceptual frame in which different landscapes can be created – of history, of Hardy's work, *in* Hardy's work. (1989: 198)

The writer has tried to bring a new kind of image of Hardy before the readers. So much so that he claims to introduce "*Another 'Wessex'; Another 'Thomas Hardy'*" (1989:198) and suggests possibility of forging a "more spirited figure" (1989: 226). It is indeed an unconventional and startling critique of Hardy.

F. B. Pinion's *Hardy the Writer: Surveys and Assessments* (1990) is a comprehensive study that contains 20 critical essays about Hardy's art and philosophy. It describes "the major aspects of Hardy's work as a whole, in a progressive, anticipative manner" (1990: ix). The author has thoroughly analyzed Hardy's fiction and poetry. He has eulogized the expertise with which Hardy has delineated "the conditions of modern life" (1990: 93). He also asseverates that Hardy's vision has never been constant instead it remained subjected to "*changes*" and "*modifications*" (1990: 263). The author of this study has systematically described the consistencies and the inconsistencies existent in Hardy's works.

Duffins' study (1991) provides a sound critique of Hardy's art and his philosophy of life. He declares him to be "*a philosopher-artist*" (1991: 257). He puts forth the crux of his reading of Hardy by saying: "to have read Hardy is to be prepared to meet the injustices of existence with a shrug of contemptuous and unsurprised acceptance; it is a better training than average life itself, for it is more concentrated" (1991: 186). Though the statement is a hyperbolic one, it communicates the intensity of dejection which the readers of Hardy are supposed to experience.

Williams' study, *A Preface to Hardy* (1993), is similar to that of Desan. She

discusses almost all the prominent aspects of Hardy: his life, his fiction and his poetry. She has considered his short stories which "have generally been overlooked" (1993: 116). She has also considered the "indelible marks" of serialization upon the texts of Hardy's novels (1993: 190). In short, the book aims to develop a holistic view of Hardy's attitude towards life by considering all aspects of his literary output.

An unconventional critique of Hardy is offered by Jane Thomas in her *Thomas Hardy, Femininity and Dissent* (1999). She has focused on feministic issues and investigated them with reference to Hardy's marginalized novels. While explaining the nature of her work, she says: "In pointing up the similarities between a poststructuralist view of human condition and Hardy's philosophic system I intend to develop new readings of his marginalized novels..." (1999: 2). She has compared Hardy's view of human condition with that of poststructuralists to find new dimensions in Hardy's ignored novels. She states that the purpose of her study is to "examine Hardy's marginalized novels, demonstrating their focus on the process by which female subjectivity is constructed at a time of social crisis and change..." (1999: 51). So, her focus is not humanity in general instead she has analyzed the situation from female perspective.

Page's book *Thomas Hardy* (2001) is devoted only to analysis of Hardy's novels. He has criticized Hardy's novels from the perspective of structuralism by analyzing Hardy's view under the binaries like Beginnings and Endings, Individuals and Communities, Man and Woman etc. But he is fully aware of the fact that there can not be any single system of ideas that could represent Hardy's vision holistically. In the concluding chapter of his study, he denotes the multidimensional character of Hardy's

mind and says: "Hardy the novelist not only invites but requires a pluralist approach" (2001: 183). Shortly, he has accepted the inability of structuralist literary theory to cope with the complexities and discontinuities of Hardy's ideas.

Harvey's (2003) is the study that aims to conglomerate the existing critical material and present it in a coherent form. Instead of independently commenting upon Hardy, he has tried to substantiate all of his statements by referring to his predecessors' works on Hardy. He accepted the sordid condition of humanity in Hardy's world but he asserted also that "Hardy's is not a nihilistic vision" (2003: 66). He has approached Hardy's work from multifarious perspectives and criticized it by applying several literary theories upon it: formalism, structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, Marxist criticism, and feminist theory.

The efforts have been made to synthesize the existing critical material on Hardy to facilitate Hardy's readers. But the fact is that complexity and ambivalence of his work can not be explained by simply putting it into the machine of structuralism. Mallett has edited a study (2004) of this nature in which a synthesis of divergent views is aimed at. But this work, like all other works of the nature, is marred by oversimplification of the perplexing and confusing views of critics.

A lot of work has been done to explain Hardy's vision, the novelist who is an ironist of "the very conditions of human existence" (Daiches 2005: 1073). The review of available literature on him shows not only the multidimensional and ambivalent nature of his genius but also copiousness and profusion of the critical material. All these studies are a rich source of critical material about Hardy that contains iridescent views of critics.

Widdowson has rightly summed up the discussion about conflicting views of critics about Hardy by saying that "he has had a chequered critical history" (1989: 5). The heterogeneity of the critical views about Hardy presents an abstract picture of his vision of human condition.

2.3 Coelho's Optimistic Approach Towards Human Existence

Paulo Coelho is a novice in the field of literature in comparison to Hardy who is a part of the canon. His novels, in spite of their popularity, could not win any serious critical acclaim of critics till the present time. Only a few sources are available to me:

1. Bel Mooney. *The Visionary World of Paulo Coelho* (Times, June 11th 2005)
<http://www.belmooney.co.uk>. 20 Dec 2010
2. Terrence Malick. *Paulo Coelho: Writing in a Global Language* (weekly Times, August 30, 2005) <http://www.nytimes.com>. 20 Dec 2010
3. Fernando Morais. *A Warrior's Life: A Biography of Paulo Coelho* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008).
4. Anthony P. Arroyo. *The Alchemist (Coelho)* (USA: GradeSaver, 2009).

Mooney's article *The Visionary World of Paulo Coelho* (2005) is a crucial work as far as the critical value is concerned. Though her article lacks systematic arrangement and she writes in a zigzag manner, her judgments are valuable. She starts from the reception of Coelho's work, by his critics, as *tosh* and goes on to identify autobiographical elements in his works which is abruptly followed by a casual note on simplicity of his prose and its compliance with his notion of universal language. She

acknowledges the influence of Borges upon him and mentions affiliation of his fantastic fiction to the movement of *Magic Realism*. She asserts the metaphysical and optimistic nature of Coelho's works. She finds similarity between this fabulist writer and George Eliot, a great Victorian novelist. The article contains, despite of its unsystematic style, an authentic critique of Coelho's works.

The other article available to me is Malick's *Paulo Coelho: Writing in a Global Language* (2005). The article is about the notion of existence of universal language with reference to Coelho's works. It is a laudatory article in which there is a dearth of analytical reasoning. It is an unsubstantial review of Coelho's works that can not be taken as criticism of his novels instead it contains nothing but casual remarks and superficial comments.

Fernando Morais's *A Warrior's Life* (2008) is a biography of Paulo Coelho that throws light on his life and his vision of life. It is an authentic source of information about Coelho's works and their reception by readers. It also describes the hostility shown by the Brazilian critics who kept on "using heavy artillery fire" (2010: 375) upon him. Morais also asserts that "fortunately for Paulo, the bacteria of critics' remarks did not infect sales" (2010:377). The book lacks the critical merit because it is written by a journalist, not by a critic, who, though a good writer, does not have the critical acumen of high caliber.

Arroyo's study *The Alchemist (Coelho)* (2009) is a guide for readers to help them understand salient aspects of Coelho's *The Alchemist*. It epitomizes the novel, highlights the major themes, discusses the characters, and analyzes the contents of the novel. It

also contains brief biographical information about the author of the novel, Paulo Coelho. But the book is not much beneficial for the readers of advanced level because it is merely an explanation of the novel and not a critical appreciation of it.

The brief review highlights not only scarcity of critical material but also superficiality of the majority of the available work done on Coelho and his philosophy of life. Critics have shown a grave kind of indifference, and in some cases hostility, towards his works. The gap between the popular acclaim and the critical reception is startling. But the fact remain unassailable that though he has failed to get attention of the prominent critics of the modern era, his creative works are being read and loved all over the world.

The critical review of the available literature on the relevant issues has provided a sound foundation on which the whole study can be structured. It has brought forth what had already been said about all the three issues: human condition with reference to existentialism, Hardy's tragic vision, and Coelho's optimistic approach towards human existence. The review will facilitate the researcher to approach the issues in a better way with help of the previous critical appreciations of the issues.

Notes

1. The view is expressed by Warnock in her preface to Sartre's translated book (Sartre 1986: viii).
2. Hazel E. Barnes, in her introduction to the translated version of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, says about the theme of the book: "Yet we might also say that it is a study of human condition; for since 'man is the being by whom Nothingness comes into the world', this means that man himself is Being and Nothingness" (Sartre 1956: xviii). She has rightly pointed out the essential position of human condition in the book.
3. It was actually a lecture given by Sartre in 1946. Later, it was translated and published in the book form.
4. All the existentialist philosophers do not have the same kind of ideas about human condition. There has never been this kind of consensus among the philosophers. They are generally grouped into two categories: theistic (religious) existentialists and atheistic (secular) existentialists. Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, is a theistic existentialist while Sartre is considered to be the most prominent thinker among atheistic existentialists. But the unifying factors that keep them in the same category, the existentialist philosophers, are their attachment and commitment to the study of man "*as a unique object of attention*" (Warnock 1971:1), their "desire to change one's readers" (Warnock 1971:7), their "interest in human freedom" (Warnock 1971:1), and their "peculiar methodology" that "unite them into a recognizable 'school' of philosophy". (Warnock 1971:232,233)

CHAPTER 3

DEPICTION OF HUMAN CONDITION IN HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE* AND *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

O life with the sad seared face,
I weary of seeing thee,
And thy dragged clock, and the hobbling pace,
And thy too-forced pleasantry!

(Thomas Hardy)

In this chapter, Hardy's vision of human condition is explored from the existentialist perspective. For this purpose, texts of his two novels, *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*¹, are analyzed focusing on certain issues pertaining to human existence in the cosmos. The major issues discussed here are: Hardy's pessimistic approach towards human existence, the issue of free will and determinism, exploration of the problem of Sartrean facticity, Hardy's humanism, destructive nature of love in human life, the expression of anguish, the theme of seeking self, and negation of the concept of poetic justice.

3.1 Hardy's Pessimistic Approach Towards Human Existence

Human life is not lusciously outlined by Hardy since he has a gloomy outlook with reference to human condition. His is almost a cynical depiction of human beings who are shown to have a wretched existence almost devoid of happiness and felicity. His novels exhibit his pessimistic approach with reference to human beings' life in the world.

The Return of the Native is a manifestation of Hardy's despondent frame of mind regarding human existence. In the novel, at the very outset, Hardy exhibits his outlook unambiguously in the epigraph that reads:

To Sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly,
She is so constant to me, and so kind.
I would deceive her,
And so leave her,
But ah! She is so constant and so kind. (Thomas Hardy 2006: I)

Sorrow, in these poetic verses, is personified by Hardy as a faithful beloved who always adheres to fidelity and never commits perfidy. Man is trying to beguile her and desert her but she is not giving him the chance to do so by remaining steadfastly with him. In these verses, the device of personification is aptly used to demonstrate the pulverization of humanity by adversity, a notion cherished by Hardy. They are the key to his pessimistic approach towards human existence.

There is an abundance of poignant statements in the novel, made by different characters, which communicate Hardy's tragic propensity. Most of them seem to be complaining of the austerity of human life and the paucity of happiness. For instance, Clym, arguing with his mother in favour of his decision of deserting Paris, says: "I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain ..." (Hardy 2006: 177). The purport of the utterance is unambiguous that man is living his life in a lamentable condition.

His portrayal of human beings endorses and ratifies the despondent character of his vision. Almost all of his characters are spending their lives in an obnoxious condition

and there is scarcely a character that could be considered to be happy and gay. The paucity of happiness is one of the most glaring features of his fiction. Clym Yeobright, the protagonist of *The Return of the Native*, is subjected to undeserved calamities which ruin his life and prove to be deleterious for his humanitarian endeavour to establish an educational institution to educate the illiterate people of Egdon Heath. Mrs Yeobright, Clym's mother, is the other character whose miserable life and, ultimately, tragic death has heart rending impact. Eustacia Vye, the heroine of the novel, is even more pathetically delineated character. She is presented as an unfortunate female figure who is striving to live her life in accordance with her own cravings. Hardy puts the matter: "She cast about for any possible course which offered the least improvement on the existing state of things, and could find none" (2006: 259). In other words, she leaves no stone unturned to ensure a luxurious and comfortable life for herself but her hopes are dashed and she keeps on treading the path of deterioration until her calamitous death. Some other characters, like Thomison and Wildeve, also are the offshoots of Hardy's tragic vision.

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, same kind of picture of humanity is presented. The novel is an account of the devastation of innocent people and "it plunges far deeper into the tragic heart of life" (Duffin 1991: 58). The characters of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are, like those of *The Return of the Native*, woebegone and downcast. Tess, a charming and fascinating girl, is compelled to live an odious life after being ravished by Alec D'Urbervilles and deserted by Clare. Clare who is supposed to redeem Tess, clashes with Tess for being deflowered by Alec and the clash results in an "infinite ruin" (Duffin 1991:102). Hardy inscribes pertinent lines to outline Tess's pathetic plight:

Behold, when thy face is made bared, he that loved thee shall hate;
Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.
For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain;
And the veil of thine head shall be grief, and the crown shall be pain.

(2008: 263)

These lines succinctly present the tragic picture of Tess's life that is being enmeshed by miseries. She has been made to suffer at an extent that she appears to be an embodiment of misery. Her being has become pain for her and she is living her life environed by afflictions.

Death looms large in Hardy's novel and it brings catastrophic finale to damned life. In *The Return of the Native*, Mrs Yeobright's death complicates situation which is not resolved until it entails the demise of two other characters, Wildeve and Eustacia. At the end of the novel, the protagonist is found to be in a situation in which his loving mother and beloved wife are no more with him. Death stands victorious in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, too. Tess is hanged as a repercussion of her crime of killing Alec while their illegitimate son is already dead. Elegiac notes are found everywhere in the texts of Hardy's novels.

Nomenclature is another factor that is testimony to his pessimistic approach towards human condition. In *The Return of the Native*, some chapters are named in the way that represents his despairing outlook. For instance, the second chapter of the novel is named as "*Humanity appears upon the scène, Hand in Hand with Trouble*" (Hardy 2006: 7). The title is a clear expression of the troubled-stricken nature of humanity. Same is the case with the other novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Here, the illegitimate son of Tess is named *Sorrow* (Hardy 2008: 114). This is the most representative name for him that appropriately communicates the wretchedness of his life. This artistic use of

nomenclature is very significant because it shows the inner recesses of the mind of the author.

Both the novels have affirmed Hardy's pessimistic and gloomy outlook towards the state of human affairs. Human beings are, in these novels, shown to be miserable creatures who are enduring their lives, instead of enjoying them. The momentary and insignificant nature of happiness is made explicit and life is declared to be a tortuous path on which humanity is lingering in a lamentable condition.

3.2 The Issue of Free Will and Determinism

Thomas Hardy has, in these novels, minutely cogitated over human beings' relations to natural and supernatural forces and showed his antagonism to the notion of free will. He has exhibited his belief in determinism and fatalism in pellucid terms. His characters are shown to be mere marionettes in the hands of gods who consider it a frolic to destroy humanity.

His characters are fully aware of their impotence and vulnerability. They bewail the indifference, rather cruel, attitude of supernatural forces and consider that these forces account for the obliteration of bliss from human life. Eustacia Vye, the heroine of *The Return of the Native*, burst furiously:

"How I tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me!" She cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt, "O world of putting me into this imperfect, ill-Conceived world! I was capable of much; I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all! (Hardy 2006:359)

These words of Eustacia are an unequivocal assertion of the helplessness of humanity and an outrageous inculpation of the forces beyond her reach. She takes *Heavens* to be responsible for her suppression and gives vent to her anger. She thinks that had she been not maltreated by the invisible powers, she would have secured an enviable position for herself by making use of her efficacy.

The gods have undone Clym by depriving him of his visual capacity. When Eustacia, his wife, tries to persuade him to take steps to improve the situation he replies: "the more I see of life the more do I perceive that there is nothing particularly great in its greatest walks ..." (Hardy 2006: 257). Thus, he expresses his opinion about the insignificance of life and its so-called grandeur. He is contented with his paltry vocation as everything in the world appears to him to be unworthy and he feels that there is no difference between being a furze-cutter or anything else. His dejection is the result of the imposition of semi-blindness upon him by the indifferent gods.

Hardy himself, without using any mouthpiece, has denounced God and fate for their maltreatment of mankind. God is, according to him, an implacable and relentless entity. The supposition, according to him, that there is a benevolent creator is nothing but a figment of the imagination of divinities. In *The Return of the Native*, he puts down the gist of his vision and indicts fate in these words:

Misfortune has struck them gracefully, cutting off their erratic histories with a catastrophic dash, instead of, as with many, attenuating each life to an uninteresting meagerness through long years of wrinkles, neglect, and decay. (Hardy 2006:385)

He has clearly stated that he considers misfortune to be the thing that accounts for the tragic "cutting off" of human beings. Humanity, according to him, is being ruthlessly

dealt with by misfortune. Fate has forged a serpentine passage for man to cause gradual atrophy of him.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles also is an off shoot of his philosophy of determinism. The whole structure of this tragic story is constructed on the superstructure of Hardy's belief in the absence of free will. His characters are made to succumb to the circumstantial forces. While describing Tess's mental condition after her engagement to Clare, Hardy asseverates:

Tess was now carried along upon the wings of the hours, without the sense of a will. The word had given; the number of the day written down. Her naturally bright intelligence had begun to admit the fatalistic convictions common to field-folk and those who associate more extensively with natural phenomena than with their fellow-creatures; and she accordingly drifted into that passive responsiveness to all things her lover suggested, characteristic of the frame of mind.

(Hardy 2008:232)

This is the depiction of the manner in which Tess submits, in accordance with the convention of the society, to circumstances and becomes passive. This is how humanity is bound, in Hardy's world, to yield to circumstances and accept the superiority of environmental powers.

Nature, in Hardy's novels, manifests its hostility toward humanity by inducing coincidences at crucial moments to obliterate human programmes. In *The Return of the Native*, Clym Yeobright's semi-blindness at the time when he is about to inaugurate the school and Mrs Yeobright's arrival at her son's home exactly at the moment when Wildeve is there having wrongful rendezvous with Eustacia, are the examples of the destructive role played by coincidences. The same role is played by coincidences in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. For example, Tess's horse, Prince, dies in an unfortunate accident,

on the very first day of her journey, when she is on the way to eke out existence for her impoverished family. Later on, her confessional letter to Clare slips under the carpet, a coincidence that engenders drastic consequences. There is a superabundance of this phenomenon in these novels and the examples can be multiplied. These coincidences occur on crucial conjunctures to mar human plans. So much so that sometimes it seems that the whole action in Hardy's world is being determined by these coincidences. The perception of these coincidences is essential to grasp the hostile character of nature in Hardy's novels.

Hardy has adroitly reified his determinism into the texts of these novels. He vehemently repudiated the notion of free will and accentuated the incapacity of human beings. He has presented human beings as mere puppets being reigned over by the tyrannical powers who pulverize them without paying heed to their yearnings. He does not share existentialists' belief that human beings are free to choose their course of action.

3.3 Exploration of the Problem of Sartrean Facticity

In the selected novels of Hardy, the characters are shown to be entangled in different kind of nets. All the hurdles in the way of humanity, discussed by Sartre in his discussion of the issue of *facticity*², are present in the world created by Hardy in his novels. These five hurdles are: "my place, my past, my surroundings, my fellow-brethren, my death" (Desan 1954: 107).

The very first hurdle, according to Sartre, that everyone is supposed to encounter is that of *place*. This factor is extrinsically present in *The Return of the Native*. Egdon

Heath is the place where the whole tragic drama of human destruction is staged. This place plays the pivotal role in the tragic life of the characters. Eustacia abhors its overwhelming presence and dominating influence. It is "her Hades" and she is "eternally unreconciled thereto" (Hardy 2006:64). It nourishes the fatal insect that takes life of Mrs Yeobright. At the end of the novel, this is the place where Eustacia and Wildeve get drowned in the water.

The next hurdle before human beings is their dependence upon their *past*. Their past keeps on influencing their present and it shapes their future, too. In *The Return of the Native*, Mrs Yeobright's misunderstanding, that the door is intentionally not opened for her, is purely based on her past unpleasant relation with Eustacia. Had there been good relation between her and Eustacia in the past, she would have not misinterpreted the situation. This misunderstanding, a direct result of the past experience, makes Mrs Yeobright's draw wrong conclusion and return to home, an action of her that brings her death. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* also *past* provides the paraphernalia for the tragic circumstances. Tess suffers due to an unconsciously committed sin of her past, her sexual intercourse with Alec D'Urberville. The ghost of the past remains present in her life and causes her separation with Clare. All the subsequent contretemps of Tess's life are the repercussion of this event of her past. These instances evidence the drastic effects of past on human beings in Hardy's novels.

The *surrounding* is the other factor that creates problems for human freedom. Sartre believes surrounding to be indifferent but Hardy takes it as an adverse factor that directly opposes the human interests. In *The Return of the Native*, surrounding entangles the characters in such a way that they find themselves in conflict with one another.

Clym, Mrs Yeobright, Eustacia, Wildeve and others, all these characters are in conflict among themselves. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it is the surrounding that compels Tess to submit to the temptation of Alec D'Urberville. In this manner, surrounding affects the lives of human beings.

Another hurdle before human freedom is termed by Sartre as "My fellow brethren". All human beings affect the freedom of one another. In *The Return of the Native*, different characters influence the lives of other characters. Clym comes and dashes Wildeve's hope of marrying Eustacia to earth. Eustacia becomes the cause of a grave kind of rift between Clym and his mother. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it is Alec D'Urberville who ruins life of Tess. In both of the selected novels, the conflicts among human beings cause dreadful mishaps and obstruct the individuals' efforts for securing happiness.

Death is the last hurdle described by Sartre, in his discussion of the concept of facticity, which makes humanity lose its existence and step into nothingness. This factor is one of the most essential parts of the world constituted in these two novels. In *The Return of the Native*, Mrs Yeobright, Wildeve and Eustacia are victimized by death under very tragic circumstances. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, John Durbeyfield, the father of Tess, and Sorrow, the illegitimate son of Tess, die leaving the woebegone lady in the clutch of circumstances. Ultimately, she herself is hanged for the murder of Alec D'Urberville. This is how death brings the tragic extinction of Hardy's characters.

All the five hurdles analyzed by Sartre in his analysis of the issue of *facticity* are aptly presented by Hardy in his novels. He has shown human freedom to be restricted by

all of these hurdles. In his world, humanity fails to surpass these hurdles and their efforts to attain happiness are made futile. People are made to live embroiled by all these obstacles. They are deprived of the freedom to live in compliance with their wills and wishes.

3.4 Hardy's Humanism

Although Hardy has a pessimistic approach towards the nature of human condition, he is not a misanthrope. His philanthropic disposition is present in his works as an extrinsic phenomenon. He exonerates humanity of all the evil inherent in it and considers it to be lovable. His characters win sympathies instead of appearing as detested and condemned ones.

In *The Return of the Native*, he has created a world in which the innocent people are shown to be crushed by the merciless supernatural forces. Clym, the hero, is shown to be a loving and worth loving character who attracts the sympathies of the reader by his simple and selfless disposition. Mrs Yeobright, Clym's mother, is also a simple but attracting character who wins sympathies because of her pathetic finale. But Hardy's humanistic attitude appears more explicitly when he sympathizes even with those characters who play a kind of villainous role. Eustacia, Clym's wife, contributes largely to bring the catastrophic end of the story. But even she is presented by Hardy as a pitiable character and not as a villain. So much so that Wildeve is released, at the end of the novel, of all the negative impressions because of his sacrificial act of jumping into the water to save Eustacia. His death stands as a compensation of his actions and he appears to be a piteous character.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is another proof of the humanistic dimension of Hardy's mind. He, in this novel, shares the sorrows of his victimized characters and condemns, like his characters, the supernatural powers for their cruel disposition towards helpless humanity. He expresses his thoughts about the rape of Tess in these words:

Doubtless some of Tess d'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time. But though to visit the sins of fathers upon the children may be a morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature; and it there for does not mend the matter. (Hardy 2008:91)

He turns down the dreary moral justification of the heinous crime. He makes Clare to say about the ravished Tess: "You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit" (Hardy 2008:263). He does not acquiesce in the denunciation of humanity in the name of sham moral order.

The critical examination of the novels makes the fact clear that Hardy has a philanthropic frame of mind. He accepts the presence of shortcomings in human beings but he does not sanction to denounce them for their deficiencies. He is not like Swift who denounces his character on the basis of their malpractices and weaknesses. Hardy's depiction of human beings' miserable condition is the result of his dejection upon their plight. Shortly, despite all of their mistakes, his characters remain lovable and do not appear to be detestable.

3.5 The Destructive Role of Love in Human Life

Love is one of the sweetest emotions cherished by people to console their souls and make their lives pleasant. But in Hardy's novels, love plays a destructive role in the

lives of the characters. Their intensity of love brings nothing but the destruction that eschews happiness from their lives.

In *The Return of the Native*, almost all the love affairs of different characters result in failure and meet catastrophic finale. Clym-Eustacia affair, at the initial stages, seems to be a successful one but the illusion of success is vanished when the fissure begins to appear between Clym's mission and Eustacia's ambition. Ultimately, the marriage proves to be a sheer failure and the root cause of the whole tragic circumstances. The tragic end of the affair was anticipated by Hardy in these words: "The unreasonable nimbus of romance with which she had encircled that man might be her misery" (2006:146). Wildeve-Thomison love adventure brings humiliation in the beginning and ends tragically with the tragic death of Wildeve. But the most heinous affair is that of Eustacia and Wildeve. Both of them kept on their infatuation even after their marriages to Clym and Thomison, respectively. They delude their life partners and their illicit relation causes nothing but the disturbance in the lives of their families. All the three love affairs prove to be disastrous for the people involved in these affairs.

Hardy, in his *The Return of the Native*, elaborates his views about the destructive nature of love through a fine simile:

To court their own discomfiture by love is a common instinct with certain perfervid women, whose temerity in this respect resembles that of the daring aristocrats who previous to the French Revolution patronized and coquetted with the philosophy which afterwards proved their ruin. (2006:145)

The simile is an apt one because both the abstract entities, love and philosophy, are supposed to provide comfort to people. But philosophy proved to be disastrous for

French aristocrats and, according to Hardy, the same kind of ruinous role is played by love. Sometimes, it becomes the source of pleasure but even then it is not more than “a doleful joy” (Hardy 2006: 67).

Love shows its destructive facet in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, too. The love marriage of Clare and Tess brings no consolation to both the lovers instead it creates grave kind of misunderstanding that ruins lives of them. During the period of their separation, both of the lovers suffer greatly and miss each other. At the end, Tess kills Alec only because he abuses her lover, Clare. In this way, her love for Clare makes her a killer. Retty and Marian are the other two innocent victims of the passion of love. While commenting upon the causes of the miserable condition of the two unfortunate lovers of Clare, Hardy states they “They were simple and innocent girls on whom the unhappiness of unrequited love had fallen; they had deserved better at the hands of Fate” (2008: 254). He blatantly incriminates love for making the lives of these innocent girls miserable. Their unaltered passion of love has destroyed them because it could not achieve gratification.

Both the novels authenticate the proposition that love plays a destructive and ruinous role in the world created by Hardy. His characters try to attain happiness through the sweet passion of love. But, ironically, it contributes to their miseries and their lives become more and more pathetic. In Hardy’s world, love has no remedial role to play in life instead it has a devastating character.

3.6 The Expression of Anguish

Anguish is the state of mind focused by existentialists to get access to the inner recesses of human mind. This psychological state is depicted by Hardy with dexterity. He plunges into the minds of his characters and brings forth the intrinsic complexities of their minds.

In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy has described the state of mind of different characters. Mrs Yeobright's frustration and agony, after being parried by her son and daughter-in-law, is appropriately described by Hardy in this way:

Her eyes were fixed on the ground; within her two sights were graven; that of Clym's hook and the brambles at the door, and that of a woman's face at a window. Her lips trembled, becoming unnaturally thin, as she murmured, "'Tis too much – Clym, how can he bear to do it! He is at home, and yet he lets her shut the door against me. "

(2006: 288)

She thinks that she is deliberately repelled from her son's house and her son has shown an unbearable apathy for her. Her utterance is aptly in accordance with her tragic situation of being neglected by her son, as she supposes the matter to be. Her statement is piercing and communicates the anguish that is being felt by her.

Clym is another character in *The Return of the Native* who is found in the same kind of mental situation. After the tragic death of his mother, he speaks to Eustacia, giving way to his anguish and bursts:

That's because you didn't know my mother's nature. She was always ready to forgive if asked to do so; but I seemed to her to be as an obstinate child, and that made her unyielding. Yet not unyielding: she was proud and reserved, no more. . . . yes, I can understand why she held out against me so long. She was waiting for me. I daresay she said a hundred times in her sorrow, 'What a return he makes for all the

sacrifices I have made for him!' I never went to her! When I set out to visit her it was too late. To think of that is nearly intolerable!

(Hardy 2006:313)

He gives outlet to his anguish and laments upon his dilatory demeanour towards reconciliation with his mother. He takes his procrastination to be the cause of his mother's death. He thinks of mental torture his mother had had to bear only because of his negligence. The consciousness of his guilt pricks him and he repents for his wrongdoing.

Same is the situation in the other novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess, after her defilement by Alec, returns to her family. Her virginity has become a thing of past. She complains to her mother about being not warned against the danger of being seduced and says:

'O mother, my mother!' ... 'How could I be expected to know? I was a child while I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was a danger in men-folk? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o' learning in that way, and you did not help me!' (Hardy 2008: 100)

Her words expose the agonizing thoughts that prick the poor girl's mind who has unconsciously submitted to the seduction. She complains of not being informed about the danger of getting defiled. She thinks that had she been informed by her mother about the treacherous attitude of men, she would have saved her chastity. Her anguish is justified and her expression of it is excruciating.

Clare, the protagonist of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, articulates same kind of expression. Hardy relates his pronouncement: "Thus he beheld her recede, and in anguish of his heart quoted a line from a poet, with peculiar emendations of his own---

God's not in his heaven: all's wrong with the world!" (2008:288). The statement communicates the utter feeling of helplessness and desperation. It is an exclamation of a desperate human being who, in the fit of anguish, rebuts the presence of God and disapproves the established structure of the world.

Many of Hardy's characters give way to their feeling of anguish at various occasions.¹³ They are fully aware of their vulnerability and this consciousness of their helplessness makes them express their frustration and anguish. They vehemently release their agony through their forceful utterances. These piercing expressions of them are a source of access to their mind for the readers.

3.7 The Theme of Seeking Self

Another existentialist dimension that is present in Hardy's selected novels is the theme of seeking self. His characters are striving desperately to materialize their dreams and achieve their destinations by finding their true places in this cosmos. In *The Return of the Native*, the characters are striving to achieve their destinations. Eustacia is the most obstreperous character who endeavours to be free and live a life according to her will. But she could not be able to achieve her destination and dies during her strenuous effort to be free. Clym leaves Paris, a symbol of luxury, to seek his true self and comes to his fatherland with his dream of establishing a school for the poor people. He justifies his decision of deserting Paris for the establishment of a school at Egdon Heath and, to explain his plan, says to his neighbours:

I would give it up, and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be of most use. I have come home; and this is how I mean to carry out my plan. I shall keep a

school as near to Egdon as possible, so as to be able to walk over here and have a night school in my mother's house. (Hardy 2006:172)

He wants to achieve self realization by materializing his dream of educating the rustic people of his native land. He rebuts his mother's arguments to carry on his business in Paris and explains to her:

... yet there am I selling trinkets to women and fops, and pandering to the meanest vanities – I, who have health and strength enough for anything. I have been troubled in my mind about it all the year, and the end is that I cannot do it anymore. (Hardy 2006: 177)

He feels himself to be unable to continue this undignified business because it appears to him to carry on it means to waste his life in frivolities. He wants to serve his people but fails to accomplish his mission and becomes, due to his semi-blindness, a petty furze cutter. His renunciation of the luxurious life of Paris could not become the source of his self-realization.

Tess's father, John Durbeyfield, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, comes to know that he is a descendent of a noble family, D'Urbervilles. He longs to restore his ancestral grandeur. But his obsession with the grand past of his family brings ironical effect; he stops earning and becomes destitute. Tess, obeying the order of her mother, goes to the family of D'Urbervilles to seek their kinship. There she fails to maintain her true purity and gets deflowered by Alec D'Urberville. Alec proves to be a hurdle between her true self, a pure woman, and her. She tries her utmost to regain her purity with the help of the love of Angel Clare but fails. Clare deserts her considering her an unchaste woman.

In both the novels, the characters struggle to seek their true selves but could not do so because of the hostile attitude of the supernatural powers. They are deprived of the

right of living in accordance with their personal aspirations. They remain unable to materialize their dreams of achieving their personal destinations.

3.8 Negation of the Concept of Poetic Justice

In the cosmic order, presented by Hardy in his novels, the concept of poetic justice appears to be a myth forged by people who try to console themselves by the means of pseudo morality and keep on waiting for the reward of their good deeds⁴. In this world, according to Hardy, good and bad are being equally scaled without any discrimination.

In *The Return of the Native*, the people are being punished by the supernatural forces without any regard of their goodness or badness. Clym is a good person who abandons the luxurious life of Paris for the betterment of the people of Egdon Heath. He wants to establish an educational institution to educate the illiterate people of the place so that they could be able to improve their condition. He studies exhaustively to prepare himself for the project. But the fruit of his study is not the knowledge but the semi-blindness which destroys his life. So, instead of being rewarded for his humanitarian pursuit, he is punished with the imposition of semi-blindness. Mrs Yeobright also is a good mother who loves her son and never did any harm to anyone. She becomes the victim of Egdon Heath that kills her by the means of an adder. Her death proves that in Hardy's world there is no room for the ideal situation of poetic justice. Moreover, Thomison is an innocent maiden who is subjected to undeserved calamities that make her life miserable. Her character is another example of the victim of undeserved tribulations.

Hardy believes that there is no justice in the world in which humanity is thrown to suffer. He outlines the salient features of the present cosmic order while fancying Eustacia to be a goddess and says:

Had it been possible for the earth and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for a while, had she handled the distaff, the spindle, and the shears at her own free will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up of favours here, of contumely there, the same generosity before justice, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alternation of caresses and blows as we endure now.

(Hardy 2006:63)

He has meticulously pointed out the different kinds of injustice existent in the world and shown the iniquitous nature of existence. Had Eustacia, according to him, been the controller of the world, she would have been unjust exactly like the present ruler of the world.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, also, is an example of the repudiation of the notion of poetic justice. The novel shows the characters to be subjected to the unmerited adversities. In the last paragraph of the novel, when Tess is being hanged, Hardy describes the scene thus:

Upon the cornice of the tower a tall staff was fixed. Their eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing.

(2008:448)

The ironical use of the word 'Justice' evinces the acridity and pungency that is implied by Hardy to decry the malpractice of the *President of Immortals*. Tess's death as well as

her life is nothing but the exhibition of the injustice of the powers that control human lives.

Both the novels vehemently negate the validity of the concept of poetic justice. According to Hardy, there is no hamartia that brings the catastrophic fall of the protagonist and there is no good act that could avert the adversity to come. People are presented as destined to suffer whether they are good or bad. There is no connection between their goodness and happiness; and between their badness and punishment.

To sum, Hardy has incorporated his vision of human condition into the texts of the selected novels and expressed his thoughts extrinsically. Both the novels, *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, are the representatives of his vision and stance about the place of humanity in the cosmos. All above examined issues construct an intellectual construction structured by Hardy in his novels. He has minutely described human feelings and psychological complexities in his novels. He has scrutinized the theme of human condition from multifarious perspectives and presented his views about it in unambiguous terms. He has declared human life to be a sheer failure.⁵ These novels characterize the kernel of Hardy's pessimism and show the humanity to be the innocent victim of injustices of life. Both the novels stand as the representatives of his peculiar thesis of human condition in this cosmic order.

Notes

1. For the study, Peacock Classics editions of the novels, *The Return of the Native* (2006) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (2008), published by Peacock books New Delhi, are used.
2. The issue of facticity is discussed and elaborated in Sartre's monumental work *Being and Nothingness* (1943).
3. It is an obvious feature of Hardy's art that his sorrowful statements are more efficacious than his gleeful ones. He seems to be at his apex when he speaks in melancholic tones.
4. It has been a tradition with the writers to present good being rewarded and bad being punished but Hardy does not observe the tradition.
5. At this point, Hardy shows his affinity with and shares the view of Sartre who believes that the "human reality is and continues a failure" (Desan 1954:210).

CHAPTER 4

TREATMENT OF THE THEME OF HUMAN CONDITION IN COELHO'S *THE ALCHEMIST* AND *THE ZAHIR*

"The warrior of light views life with tenderness and determination".

(Paulo Coelho)

The exploration of the existentialist dimensions in the selected novels of Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir*, is the theme of this chapter. For the purpose, the selected texts are approached considering only the existentialist features. All the existentialist aspects of his vision of human condition are elaborated: Coelho's optimistic weltanschauung, belief in free will, venture for self-actualization, love's constructive character, emphasis on concrete experience, philanthropic frame of mind, and corroboration of the existence of poetic justice.

4.1 Coelho's Optimistic Weltanschauung

Coelho's world, as depicted by him in his novels, is the world of success inhabited by the triumphant people and he appears to be an optimist whose optimism knows no limits. He imparts the message of hope to his readers and urges them to embrace life as a gift by the most benevolent entity. He is a dauntless apostle of hope who always preaches not to succumb to difficulties and to seek prosperity in the universe full of possibilities.

Alchemist is an exposition of Coelho's specific philosophy of life through the description of the events of the protagonist's life. Its protagonist, Santiago¹, has been presented by Coelho as a prototype triumphant person who embarks upon a journey in search of the treasure lying, according to his dreams, hidden near Pyramids. During the hero's journey, there appears an old king, Melchizedek, who imparts valuable instructions to him. There he, the old king, utters a sentence that contains the gist of Coelho's vision of the world. He says to the boy: "And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (Coelho 2009: 21).² The expression occurs recurrently, as a refrain, in the novel to emphasize the importance of the idea that humanity is helped by natural forces. Coelho has used the old king as his mouthpiece and made him assert the positive role of the universe in man's life.

On the way to Pyramids, the boy is deluded by a thief who runs away taking his money fraudulently. At this point, the boy takes stock of the situation to make a decision about his journey. Coelho describes the scene of his meditation thus:

As he mused about these things, he realized that he had to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in search of his treasure.
"I am adventurer, looking for treasure," he said to himself. (2009: 40)

The manner in which the boy shows his positive bearing at the very outset of his cruise is an evidence of the optimistic outlook with which Coelho has endowed his hero. He is not ready to submit to circumstantial difficulties that are hindering his progress towards his destination.

Santiago, in the course of his adventure, after working at a crystal shop at Tangier, shows vacillation to carry on his journey towards treasure and thinks to return to

his native land. At this point, when the boy feels to be sitting on the fence, he ponders over the situation. The scene of meditation, like the previous one, is an apt example of the propensity of Coelho's characters towards positive thinking:

The hills of Andalusia were only two hours away, but there was an entire desert between him and the Pyramids. Yet the boy felt that there was another way to regard his situation: he was actually two hours closer to his treasure... the fact that the two hours had stretched into an entire year didn't matter. (Coelho 2009: 61)

Coelho has made, in this scene, a cogent expression of the fact how one should always approach the problematic situations from the constructive angle. Santiago considers the options that are available to him. At this point, his consideration is suggestive of his positive thinking because he decides to go forward instead of going back home without accomplishing his mission.

At the end of the novel, when the hero successfully accomplishes his adventurous expedition, Coelho speaks through his hero and makes him declare that "life really is generous to those who pursue their destiny"³ (Coelho 2009: 160). This is an unequivocal assertion of his proclivity towards acknowledging the generosity of life. Life, according to Coelho, never withholds right of any deserving person instead it grants man with magnanimity.

The Zahir, Coelho's other novel selected for the study, is another representative of his optimistic vision. In this novel, humanity is communicated the message of hope and assured that "The universe takes care of correcting our mistakes" (Coelho 2007: 65).⁴ Coelho gives a piece of advice to human beings: "Show some respect for your time on this earth, and know that God has always forgiven you and always will" (Coelho 2007:

68). He requires humanity to believe that invisible universal forces are always inclined to help it to improve its predicament because there is no enmity between humanity and these universal forces.

These novels are the expositors of the writer's mind and suggest his hopefulness. The writer consoles human beings not by singing mere lullabies to them rather he shows them the paths that lead to their destinations. He provokes humanity not to be disappointed because it is disappointment that makes human efforts to reach destination end in fiasco. Courage, hope, and determination are, according to him, the paraphernalia that is required to complete the journey and reach the destination. These novels are the messages from a sanguine intellectual who essays to make the world appear as the place where hopes are accomplished and dreams are realized.

4.2 Belief in Free Will

The notion of free will, one of the major tenets of the existentialist philosophers, is preached by Coelho in his novels and these two novels are no exceptions in this respect. For him, man is an absolutely independent entity having the prowess to make decisions concerning his course of action in the world. Man is the centre of the world created by Coelho in these novels.

In *The Alchemist*, the hero chooses to go to find his treasure in compliance with his personal desire to ferret out the treasure that is being introduced to him through dreams. At the very beginning of his search for the treasure, the boy meets an old man, Melchizedek, who teaches him a lot of crucial things about achieving ones dream.

During his conversation with the old man, they discuss significant issue with reference to the book the boy holds in his hand. The conversation goes thus:

“It describes people’s inability to choose their own destinies. And it ends up saying that everyone believes the world’s greatest lie.”
“What’s the world’s greatest lie?” the boy asked, completely surprised.
“It is this: that at a certain point in our lives, we lose control of what’s happening to us, and our lives become controlled by fate. That’s the world’s greatest lie.” (Coelho 2009: 17)

In this passage Coelho has patently articulated his views about the role of fate in human life and declared that to accept the ruling role of fate is the greatest misconception of the world. At another place, describing the cause of the baker’s failure, Coelho makes the old man speak: “He never realized that people are capable, at any time of in their lives, of doing what they dream of” (Coelho 2009:21).

Man has the power, in Coelho’s world, to make the world as he himself wants it to be for him. Coelho firmly asserts that the world is not a menacing place to be feared of. It seems so because “Most people see the world as a threatening place, and, because they do, the world turns out, indeed, to be a threatening place” (Coelho 2009: 125). Otherwise, the world is not inherently dangerous place to live in. The power to make this world a domain of pleasure or an area of devastation lies with man. It is he who shapes the world by using his free will.

Coelho’s unvarying belief in human beings’ potency to subsist according to their wills, without being mere puppets in the hands of some invisible power, is made explicit in *The Zahir*, too. In the very first part of the novel, titled *I am a Free Man*, the hero of the novel plainly exposes his thoughts that “I’m free, independent” (Coelho 2007: 8). He speaks out his view about freedom: “freedom continues to be the thing I prize most in

the world” (Coelho 2007: 10). So, at the very outset, the writer has forecasted his belief in freedom of humanity. The whole novel relates the story of a couple that is striving to surpass the hurdles lying before its independent being. At the end of the novel, the hero gets rid of his past and “*history*” (Coelho 2007:334). Past is one of the hurdles, discussed by Sartre, before humanity that obstructs it from the achievement of freedom. But Coelho’s hero surpasses the hurdle and attains freedom by getting rid of his past and starting a life as if he were a newly born child.

Coelho has emancipated his characters from the clutch of fate and given them the freedom to live in the world as they want to live without being intruded by any tyrannical power reigning over. He asserts again and again that whatever is happening to humanity is the result of their actions and can be modified by modifying behaviour. His characters do enjoy the freedom and wield it to reach their destinations.

4.3 Venture for Self-actualization

There has always been the tradition with the optimist writers to present adventurous heroes to their readership so that they could be instigated to be hopeful and endeavour to realize their true selves. Same is the case with Coelho whose characters are intrepid and enterprising ones. They follow their dreams without being scared of the hardships that are supposed to be confronted during the course of their ventures.

Santiago, the hero of *The Alchemist*, is the most venturesome character ever created by Coelho. He realizes his true self and makes his parents aware of his ambition. What is his ambition and how he informs his parents about his decision about his future is stated by Coelho thus:

But ever since he had been a child, he had wanted to know the world, and this was much more important to him than knowing God and learning about man's sins. One afternoon, on a visit to his family, he had summoned up the courage to tell his father that he didn't want to become a priest. That he wanted to travel. (Coelho 2009: 8)

His aspiration is to know the world around him instead of trying to pursue the path laid down by ecclesiastics. He wants to be a traveller and explore the vast world to be acquainted with wonders of the universe. The realization of his aim is achieved by him at very young age. He announces the profession which he is going to join and says: "I'll be a shepherd" (Coelho 2009: 9). The whole novel revolves around this one point how the boy pursues his dream of travelling in search of treasure and, ultimately, he achieves his dream.

During his journey towards pyramids, there is a camel driver accompanying Santiago in the caravan. The camel driver teaches Santiago what he has learnt from his disastrous experience of facing flood. He says to Santiago: "But that disaster taught me to understand the word of Allah: people need not fear the unknown if they are capable of achieving what they need and want" (Coelho 2009: 73). There is a message that man must keep on heading towards his goal without being scared of any supposed calamity.

In *The Zahir*, both the hero and the heroine are eagerly endeavouring to attain their true selves. The heroine, Esther, says to her husband explaining her thinking: "It would harm me more to be living a life without meaning" (Coelho 2007: 103). She wants to know the meaning of life and the reason of her existence in the universe. She disappears from life of her husband and goes to Steppes, an area in Kazakhstan, to find the meaning of her life by being one with nature. She stands successful in her pursuit and gets her reward in the form of self-actualization.

The hero of the novel, Esther's husband, is striving to understand his being and give meaning to his life. After the disappearance of his wife, he curiously tries to apprehend the causes of her disappearance and resolves to go in search of his wife. But at this juncture, instead of commencing his search blindly, he takes a sagacious decision: "Before I could find her, I must first find myself" (Coelho 2007: 179). So, he purges himself and goes to find his wife. He identifies himself with the mythical figure "*Ulysses*" and his wife with "*Penelope*" (Coelho 2007: 329). His struggle is brought to fruition and he finds his wife who has been the source of his self-realization. Thus, his strenuous effort is the cause of his resuscitation and resurrection.

Another person in the novel who attains self-realization through Esther is Mikhail, a Kazakh young man whose real name is Oleg. He is in search of a messiah who could bring his redemption by guiding him to the destination that is being searched by his soul. Esther comes to his life as the revolutionary agent and brings radical changes to his ordinary life. She shares his mystic experiences and urges him to pursue his mysterious path. He obeys her and reaches the position where he is able to understand the power inherent in him that can control the whole world.

The theme of self-actualization is dealt with scrupulously by Coelho in these novels. He has shown different characters to be successful in achieving self-actualization through their vigilant pursuit to find themselves. The point is made obvious that when a person is determined to attain his goal of self-realization, nothing can prevent him from achieving the fulfillment of his desire. So, Coelho's stance is that man stands victorious in his quest of finding his true self.

4.4 Love's Constructive Character

Love is assigned a constructive and positive role in Coelho's novels. In his world, love is not a source of aggravation instead it plays its part for the betterment of the lives of the people struggling to be successful. It sweetens their lives and assists them to keep on moving towards their goals.

Santiago, the hero of *The Alchemist*, is in search of a treasure shown to him in his dream, the dream that has made his life meaningful. During his journey towards his treasure, he falls in love with a girl, Fatima. The love puts an augmentative impact on his pursuit of the treasure. His situation, after his meeting with Fatima at the well, is depicted by Coelho in this manner:

And the boy sat there by the well for a long time, remembering that one day in Tarifa the levanter had brought to him the perfume of that woman, and realizing that he had loved her before he even knew she existed. He knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world. (2009: 90)

The description indicates the positive effect of Santiago's love affair upon his mission. It is not a source of distraction for him instead it makes him to show steadfastness. It demonstrates how love acts as a provoking force to accomplish the plans.

Commonly, at this point, the apprehension would have arisen that the love of this girl would stop the boy from pursuing his dream and make him be with her for the sake of love. But in Coelho's world the situation is exactly the opposite of it because the girl instigates the boy to carry on his journey and assures him that she will keep on waiting for him. She says to the boy:

That's why I want you to continue toward your goal. If you have to wait until the war is over, then wait. But if you have to go before then, go on in pursuit of your dream. The dunes are changed by the wind, but the desert never changes. That's the way it will be with our love for each other. (Coelho 2009: 93)

The beloved of the boy is not a hindrance before his way instead she is helping him to go forward and achieve his destination. She furthers her instigation: "you must understand that love never keeps a man from pursuing his destiny. If he abandons that pursuit, it's because it wasn't true love ... the love that speaks the Language of the World" (Coelho 2009: 115). This is how love helps the boy to continue his journey towards his goal.

The Zahir presents the same facet of love, its constructive nature. The novel is the story of a man who achieves his destination with the power of his love for his wife. At one place in this novel, Coelho expresses his thinking about the emotion of love: "love is the only thing that activates our intelligence and our creativity that purifies and liberates us" (Coelho 2007: 96). His approach towards love is very explicitly expressed in the sentence that love has an augmentative impact upon human beings. Love, in Coelho's world, has a miraculous quality of enhancing the abilities of people.

The novel narrates the story of a husband who searches his disappeared wife. His wife had been a source of inspiration for him in the past and continues to be the same as he gets self-realization in the pursuit of finding her wife. He remembers the time when he was trying to write a book but finding himself unable to write. At that time, he had looked to the source of his inspiration, his wife. He expresses his feeling of gratitude for her and gives way to his thoughts:

I look across at the woman who had just made some coffee and is now reading the newspaper, whose eyes look tired and desperate, who is her usual silent self, who does not always shows her affection in gestures,

the woman who made me say 'yes' when I wanted to say 'no', who forced me to fight for what she, quite rightly, believed was my reason for living, who let me set off alone because her love for me was greater even than her love for herself, who made me go in search of my dream; and, suddenly, seeing that small, quiet woman, whose eyes said more than any words, who was often terrified inside, but always courageous in her actions, who could love someone without humbling herself and who never ever apologised for fighting for her man, suddenly, my fingers press down on the keys. (Coelho 2007: 27)

He expresses how his wife had put her mark on him. He acknowledges that she was the person who persuaded him to realize the purpose of his existence and to struggle to live in accordance with his true nature.

From beginning till the end of the novel, his wife remains the source of inspiration for him. He acknowledges her contribution in these words:

One day, because of a woman, I made a long pilgrimage in order to find my dream. Many years later, the same woman had made me set off again, this time to find the man who had got lost along the way.
(Coelho 2007: 334)

He has limpidly acknowledged the constructive influence of his wife on his life. It was she who helped him to make full use of his creative power to write the book that was a great success. But her most important contribution to his life is that she makes him discover his reality and find the meaning of his life.

The role played by love, in Coelho's these two novels, is a productive one. There are no tragic events engendered by the failure in love affairs. Its role is not to prevent the people from going forward in search of their dreams instead it is the source of unbreakable nexus among them that compels them to help one another. The beloved, in Coelho's novels, provokes her lover to make strenuous effort to reach his destination and

does not lure him away from his journey in order to make love to her. Love is not shown as a lulling passion instead it is shown to be the instigating power.

4.5 Emphasis on Concrete Experience

Like the existentialist thinkers, Coelho advocates the priority of concrete experience over mere metaphysical speculation concerning human existence. He lays great stress on the necessity of having practical experience to comprehend the reality of existence in the world. The attempt to understand the world without physically facing its deportment is not approved by him.

When, in *The Alchemist*, the caravan is crossing Sahara desert to reach Egypt, Coelho notes the behavior of Santiago and his English companion. Both the companions are preoccupied with their quest of knowing. But their methods of penetrating into the realities of the universe are different. While the Englishman “immersed in reading his books” Santiago preferred “to observe the caravan and listen to the wind” (Coelho 2009: 73). By describing the contrasting behaviours of the two adventurers, Coelho wants to show the superiority of observing the concrete existence to looking at the world through books. He wants to make the point clear that when the world is before us in its concrete form, there is no need to rely on its abstract bookish representation.

The hero of *The Zahir* is a famous writer who tries to understand himself by exteriorizing his interiorities on the pages of his books. He, describing the purpose of his writing activities, says:

My books, however, will only ever be the mountain top visible amongst the clouds, or an island in the ocean: the light falls on it,

everything seems to be in its place, but beneath the surface lies the unknown, the darkness, the incessant search for self.

(Coelho 2007: 247)

To find his self is the purpose of his writing all these books that are received with a tremendous applause. But he could not be able to fulfill his desire of perceiving his reality by merely inscribing his thoughts in his books. Rather, for the fulfillment of his purpose, he has to undergo concrete experience. He has to suffer the agony of the disappearance of her wife and face the ordeals during his desperate search for his wife. After undergoing such physical and tangible experiences, he comes to the goal that was previously being aimed at by him through abstract conjectures in his books.

These are ample examples to substantiate the view that Coelho believes in the priority of concrete experience to the idealistic attitude to perceive the reality of existence. His representative characters want to change the people for whom “adventure was just a word in a book or an image on the television” (Coelho 2007: 10). His characters have to have practical experience by passing through ordeals for the execution of their plans.

4.6 Subjectivity And Pluralism

Subjectivity is one of the major themes of the existentialist philosophy. Coelho has displayed a pluralistic disposition by showing his belief in the concept of the relativity and subjectivity. He has outlined a world, in his novels, where there is no room for single point to which the whole humanity could be steered as a totality.

Santiago, the protagonist of *The Alchemist*, is on his way to Egypt, accompanying a caravan, to find his treasure. There is an Englishman in the caravan who is, like

Santiago, in search of his destiny. But their methods to know the meaning of life are absolutely different. Santiago is trying to imbibe the reality of life through his direct observation of the world. On the contrary, the Englishman is trying to unravel mysteries of his existence through the exploration of books. Coelho, citing Santiago's comments on their divergent attitudes, says:

“Everyone has his or her own way of learning things,” he said to himself. “His way isn’t the same as mine, nor mine as his. But we are both in search of our destinies, and I respect him for that. ” (2009: 80)

Santiago's approach is obviously a pluralist one as he shows respect for the Englishman's manner of perceiving the world. He believes that there is not only the *way* instead there are *ways* of tackling the existential problems. He recognizes that there are more than one methods of solving the conundrum of existence.

At another place in the novel Coelho shows that everyone in the world has his own goal and no one is supposed to interfere in the others' missions of life. When the alchemist turns the lead into gold, Santiago asks him, “will I learn to do that someday?” (Coelho 2009: 147). The answer offered by the alchemist is suggestive of Coelho's subjective outlook. The answer is: “This was my destiny, not yours” (Coelho 2009: 147). Coelho has presented both of them, Santiago and the alchemist, to be the triumphant fellows. But the nature of the alchemist's success is different from Santiago's. Santiago has nothing to do with the method of turning the lead into gold as it was not his goal but the goal of the alchemist. In the same way, the alchemist has no concern with the treasure hidden near Pyramids because it is meant for Santiago. Both of them are successful persons but in their peculiar ways that, though not confronting, can not be shared.

The same pluralistic approach is shown by Coelho in his *The Zahir*. He declares in the novel: “In my world, everything is possible and everything is relative” (2007: 167). This is an unambiguous declaration of his subjective approach and his belief in relativity. There can be variety of *truths*, according to Coelho, instead of the one despotic truth.

In short, Coelho’s novels present different kinds of people who have different realities. Everyone is right in his pursuit of his personal reality, the reality that gives meaning to his life. There is always room for the difference of methods and divergence of destinies. Neither the destiny of one person can be declared to be meaningless by someone other nor can it be claimed by any other person. Coelho is a pluralist whose characters are not trying to achieve any universal objective reality instead they are striving for their personal subjective realities.

4.7 Philanthropic Frame of Mind

Human beings are ardently loved by Coelho who always keenly tries to boost up their morale and make them carry on their journey of life in an ambitious manner. The selected novels, *The Alchemist* and *The Zahir*, are the outgrowth of his predilection for humanity.

The alchemist, one of the major characters of *The Alchemist*, narrates an anecdote to Santiago to make him aware of the fact that the actual greatness lies in the act of serving humanity. The story is about a Roman who was told, in his dream, by an angel that one of his two sons would be remembered as long as the world would last because of his “words” (Coelho 2009: 149). The person supposed that his son who was going to be

remembered was the one who used to compose poetry because his other son was a soldier and there was no point to think that a soldier's words could last till the end of the world. But, eventually, he came to know that it was the statement of his son who was in military that was to be remembered. The reason for which his words had become everlasting was that he had travelled a long journey to get some remedy for his poor servant and when he met the rabbi, the Son of God, he showed respect to him. His service to a poor man of God and reverence to His son were the qualities that were rewarded by immortalizing his words. After narrating the anecdote, the alchemist gives his opinion about it by saying: "No matter what he does, every person on the earth plays a central role in the history of the world" (Coelho 2009: 151). This is a forceful assertion of human beings' central position in the cosmic order.

Love for all is one of the major themes of *The Zahir*, too. Coelho has asserted, in this novel, that love is the remedy for all evils that are disturbing human life in the world. He makes Mikhail, the mysterious Kazakh, say: "The world will become real when man learns how to love" (Coelho 2007: 91). The words of Mikhail, the mouthpiece of Coelho, exhibit how much importance is given to love by Coelho who equated *how to love* with *how to live*.

Coelho's love for humanity is apparent from the fact that there are no villains in his novels. There is not even a single character in these novels who invokes abhorrence and disgust. He takes his characters on human grounds and loves even those who have committed blunders during the course of their lives.

Shortly, Coelho has a humanitarian and munificent approach. His novels are the exposition of his unconditional affection for the whole humanity in general and for courageous people in particular because he loves his daring characters more than his passive ones. Both of his selected novels are redolent of his love for his characters who are nothing but the representatives of humanity.

4.8 Corroboration of the Existence of Poetic Justice

Coelho's world is in accordance with the concept of poetic justice where good never goes unrewarded and the failure is always the result of human beings' own malpractices. Man is, in his world, bestowed his cravings as the recompense of his rigorous struggle.

In *The Alchemist*, everything is in conformity with the standard of poetic justice. Santiago zealously goes on a journey in pursuance of his dream. He endeavours to get his treasure and his hard work is rewarded in shape of the treasure he is looking for. The successful consummation of his enterprise is the crux of the novel.

Santiago meets, in the course of his journey towards Egypt, a strange old king. The old king, who is a mysterious character, relates to him the story of a hardworking miner to whom the old man had offered help as a reward of his hard work. He narrates to the boy:

The miner had abandoned everything to go mining for emeralds. For five years he had been working a certain river, and had examined hundreds of thousands of stones looking for an emerald. The miner was about to give it all up, right at the point when, if he were to examine just one more stone – just one more – he would find his emerald. Since the miner had sacrificed everything to his destiny, the old man decided to become involved. He transformed himself into a stone that rolled up to the miner's foot. The miner, with all the anger

and frustration of his five fruitless years, picked up the stone and threw it aside. But he had thrown it with such force that it broke the stone it fell upon, and there, embedded in the broken stone, was the most beautiful emerald in the world. (Coelho 2009: 22, 23)

The tale is an announcement from the natural forces, as it is narrated by their representative, that hard work can never go unrewarded. The miner had got frustrated and he was about to decide to desist his search for emeralds. But at that very decisive point, the old man, the representative of the benevolent eternal forces, appeared and made the miner find the emerald. The miner was rewarded for his work and blessed with the thing he had been searching for, for a long time.

All the characters of *The Zahir* are dealt with according to rule of poetic justice. Esther has sacrificed two precious years of her life to get self-realization and make her husband aware of his inherent potentialities. Her husband takes pain to find his true self and also his dear spouse. Both of them are given full credit of their efforts and they have found their true selves as well as their mutual love. Mikhail's striving is, like that of Esther and her husband, remunerated with his desired thing, the consciousness and attainment of his reality.

Coelho has given consideration also to the causes that bring failure to human beings' projects. He argues in this respect that "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure" (Coelho 2009: 135). His argument is clear that one must have firm faith in his success and there would be nothing that could stop one from achieving his destination. The lack of courage and the state of being skeptical about one's success are the weaknesses that entail failure. It is very simple to avoid failure and acquire success: by being hopeful.

In *The Zahir*, he puts the same idea thus: “Absolutely, we just don’t all have the courage to follow our dreams and to follow the signs. Perhaps that’s where the sadness comes from” (Coelho 2007: 43). In the statement, the idea conveyed is that failure is the repercussion of human beings’ weakness of lacking the courage to pursue their dreams. There the seed of sadness and failure are to be found.

Coelho’s these statements affirm the view that he is a staunch propagator of the concept of poetic justice. He has rekindled a renounced practice as the modern writers have no belief in the concept and they considered it to be a fabulous idea. But he has delineated a picture of the world where the poetic justice rules the affairs of humanity.

The above analysis has corroborated the presence of the existentialist strains in Coelho’s selected novels. He has made human beings the centre of his fiction and concentrated his attention on their condition. There is a complete picture of the writer’s vision of human condition in these novels. All the peculiarities of his philosophical mind are present in the texts of the novels: his optimism, his belief in free will etc.

Notes

- 1 The name is reminiscent of the protagonist of Hemingway's Nobel Prize winning novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, whose optimistic words are frequently referred to: "But man is not made for defeat" (Hemingway 1975: 50).
- 2 In Coelho's context, the word 'destiny' does not stand for an unavoidable preordained fate. Rather, it is the purpose of life and goal to which his characters are heading. As Santiago, referring to his and the Englishman's journey, says: "But we're both in search of our destinies, and I respect him for that" (Coelho 2009: 80).
- 3 Page references are to the edition of *The Alchemist* (2009) published by HarperCollins Publishers, India.
- 4 The edition of *The Zahir* (2007) referred to is published by HarperCollins Publishers, India.

CHAPTER 5

COMPARISON OF THOMAS HARDY AND PAULO COELHO'S VISIONS OF HUMAN CONDITION

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.

(William Shakespeare)

In this chapter of the study, Thomas Hardy's and Paulo Coelho's visions of human condition, deduced from their selected novels, are compared. Since there is a dearth of similarities between the views of the writers about the nature and characteristics of human life in the universe, the major portion of this chapter consists of the description of contrasts that exist between their visions of human condition. However, some similarities are also mentioned that are the source of nexus between the two writers.

5.1 Contrasting Attitudes Towards the Nature of Human Life in the Cosmic Order

Hardy's and Coelho's attitudes towards the nature of human life in the cosmic order are in sharp contrast to each other and they differ in their interpretations of the state of human affairs in the world. Their destination is same, the delineation of human condition, but their means of approaching the destination are exactly the opposite of each other.

Hardy's novels are tragedies that relate the stories of humanity's failures and destruction. Life, in his novels, is merely a movement from bad to the worst. There is no chance of making progress instead the continuous process of deterioration keeps on aggravating man's condition. For example, Eustacia, the heroine of *The Return of the Native*, is shown, in the beginning of the novel, to be dissatisfied with her dull life at Egdon Heath. Throughout the novel she is presented to be striving for making her life fascinating. Nothing but slump is the sequel of her strive for securing sublimity. She loses her life in her endeavour of making it pleasant. Clym, Wildeve, Mrs Yeobright and other characters of the novel are also depicted as the persons having a declining existence. The central couple of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Clare and Tess, belongs to the same stratum. All these characters make no journey but from misery to the utmost misery. Their desires are crushed and their efforts are made to end in smoke.

On the other hand, Coelho's novels are the narratives of man's successful adventures and his materialized dreams. In his fiction, life is depicted as a progressive movement towards a point where desires are fulfilled and dreams are realized. His characters achieve their destinations through heroic struggle and with the help of loving nature. Santiago, the adventurous protagonist of *The Alchemist*, is the most representative of his heroes. He starts his life as an ordinary shepherd. But, consequently, he becomes the master of a valuable treasure and a sagacious man. Fatima, Esther, and the unnamed hero of *The Zahir* are representatives of Coelho's flourishing people and the symbols of success.

The different roles of the coincidences, inserted in their plots by both of them, clarify the divergence of their views about the nature of human life. In Hardy's novels, a

coincidence occurs to demolish human programmes. For instance, Tess wrote a letter to Clare to inform him about her ignominious past. But, unfortunately, by sheer coincidence, her confessional letter slipped under the carpet without being noticed by Clare. Had Clare received the letter, he would have avoided marrying ravished Tess. But the coincidence of the displacement of the letter had occurred and it entailed devastating consequences.

But in Coelho's plot, the role of coincidences is totally different from their role in Hardy's. Here they are the manifestation of help provided to man by nature. They occur at the moments when man is about to get distracted from right path and they serve as omens to guide him. For example, when Santiago was intended to return to his native land to recoup his previous occupation of shepherd, there happened a coincidence that made him to dispense with the decision of discontinuing his journey to go back to his native land. The coincidence was the falling of the two stones, Urim and Thummim, given to him by the old king. These stones reminded him of the old king and he "had the strange sensation that the old king was nearby" (Coelho 2009: 59). He pondered over the situation and decided to continue his search of the treasure. Coelho states Santiago's thoughts in these words:

I can always go back to being a shepherd, the boy thought. I learned how to care for sheep, and I haven't forgotten how that's done. But maybe I'll never have another chance to get to the Pyramids in Egypt. The old man wore a breastplate of gold, and he knew about my past. He really was a king, a wise king. (Coelho 2009: 61)

The falling of the stones proved to be a beneficial coincidence for Santiago who was about to make the decision of recession from the journey. After the coincidence, he changed his mind and regained courage to pursue his journey.

Their responses to another question about human affairs are indicator of their different attitudes towards life. The question is that what happens to man when he inaugurates some plan of his life. Coelho is a staunch believer of "*Beginner's luck*" or "*Law of Favourability*" (2007: 27). The old man tells Santiago about the law that it exists "Because there is a force that wants you to realize your destiny; it whets your appetite with a taste of success" (Coelho 2009: 27). This is how, Coelho believes, nature helps beginners to go forward in search of their destinies.

On the contrary, in Hardy's world, situation is not the same. For instance, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess decides to procure earning for her family by carrying her father's business as he has become unable to carry on his work. But, unfortunately, her horse, Prince, dies on the very first day and she is left with no other option than to give up. This coincidence, like all other coincidence found in Hardy's novels, is suggestive of the destructive role that is assigned to this recurrently occurring phenomenon.

Nature is painted in different colours by these two writers. Hardy takes it as a devastator for humanity because it always keeps on conspiring against man. For example, it is nature that makes the adder to kill Mrs Yeobright by biting her on her way home. But Coelho unequivocally expresses his mind that nature always "conspires in helping ..." (2007: 21). Every object of nature, according to Coelho, helps man to accomplish his plans. The contrariety of their opinions about the function of nature in human life is very obvious.

Hardy is of the view that life is an ordeal for man through which he passes not as a conquistador instead as a wretched victim of unjustified afflictions and scourges. But

his foil, Coelho, observes exactly the opposite of it for whom life is an evidence of the munificence of nature which has blessed man with such a magnificent gift, a life full of possibilities and opportunities. Their views about life are not compatible because of the sea difference of their attitudes of looking at life.¹ Hardy takes life as a retrograde journey while Coelho considers it a progressive journey. Precisely, Hardy is an emissary from a dark world who communicates pessimistic conclusions believing that to live is to suffer and Coelho is an envoy from the world full of possibilities who is an embodiment of optimism.

5.2 Divergence of Stances Regarding Human Potency and the Role of Fate

The dissimilarity of ideas is exposed also by their tackling of the role of Fate in human life. Fate, according to Hardy, is a force that compels man to act on its orders like a mere dummy. On the contrary, Coelho introduces it as a power that helps man to live according to his personal will.

In Hardy's world man has an insignificant role to play because his course of action is determined by supernatural forces. He acts as a puppet in their hands and they use him, rather abuse him, for the satisfaction of their sadistic recreation. His efforts to act freely in accordance with his will are nothing but a fruitless fight against the powers that make him live as they wish instead of letting him live freely. Humanity, according to Hardy's vision, is bound to follow the path predestined for it by invincible forces. His characters are not in position to go ahead to acquire fulfillment of their desires. Clym faces a sheer failure not because of his fault instead his failure is the result of his semi-blindness inflicted upon him by omnipotent natural forces. Eustacia manoeuvres to

satiate her appetite of living without being clutched with manacles but her struggle brings no positive results to her life. Frustration is the fruit of her exertion. Same is the condition of Tess who is being tormented without doing any wrong willingly. She is subjected to a heinous crime, rape, and being made to face the penalty of it. The whole sorry incident is out of her control because she is compelled by circumstances to succumb unconsciously. But no one is ready to arraign invisible powers for her deflowering; even Clare, her lover, rebuts her justification and leaves her on mercy of those forces that have already extirpated her life.

Coelho, contrary to Hardy, believes that man is free to go ahead in compliance with his own will. There is no tyrannical force that encumbers his missions and makes him walk on a foreordained path. He has an unwavering belief in the notion of free will and man's potentialities to accomplish his programmes. Man is given the central role in Coelho's cosmic vision where he is not fettered by any overwhelming power. His characters are free to choose their courses of action and to go ahead to their goals without being made to move on any preordained trajectory. Santiago chooses to be a traveller to understand the marvels of the world and find his treasure. He is not obstructed by any force, natural or supernatural, to pursue his goal instead he is helped to carry on his cruise with comfort. He makes willingly all the decisions of his life; he is advised but not ordained. Esther is another character who represents Coelho's conviction in free will and human beings' potency. She decides to disappear from his husband's life to purify herself by living at a desolate place, Steppes. She does so and there is no hurdle before her to abstain her from doing so. Esther's husband also is a free figure who is fully conscious of his freedom and consistently refers to his free status. In short, Coelho's all

characters have complete authority over themselves and they are free to do whatever they want to do at any stage of their lives.

The difference on the issue of free will is one of the major differences between Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition. While one insists on his fatalistic deductions, the other appears to be a staunch believer in free will. Their views about the issue are discordant to the extent that they are simply irreconcilable and both the writers are poles apart at the point.

5.3 Disparity About the Concept of Poetic Justice

The concept of poetic justice is another juncture where the novelists separate their intellectual routes and choose to go in different directions. One, Hardy, totally nullifies its existence in the world full of injustices and the other, Coelho, opines that the affairs of this world are being governed by this law.

Hardy presents a world in his novels where everything is happening against the rules of justice. The governing powers keep on violating justice and dealing people in an unjustified manner. His characters are presented as victim of the injustices of ferocious fate. Clym's humanistic effort to establish a school at Egdon Heath brings no good to him. He exerts himself to study to enable himself for teaching and becomes semi-blind as a consequence of his continuous study. The two other absolutely innocent figures, Mrs Yeobright and Thomison, are made to face inequitable sufferings. But the greatest victim, in Hardy's novels, of unmerited adversities is Tess. She has not done any wrong consciously but whole of her life passes facing different kinds of hardship.

Coelho, on the other hand, maintains situation according to the law of poetic justice. There is no violation of justice in his world. Everyone, in his fictional world, is being given reward of his struggle and every vice is being punished. Santiago strives to attain his treasure and journeys from Andalusia to Egypt in search of it. He is blessed with success because of his consistency and hard work. Esther sacrifices two valuable years of her life to find the meaning of her life. Her sacrifice is not squandered instead she gets her reward and becomes aware of the meaning of her life. Same rule applies to all of Coelho's characters.

Both the writers have exhibited conflicting views about the concept of the presence of poetic justice in the world. One strongly negates the presence of any kind of justice in the world and claims that people are subjected to injustices in the world that is being governed by an unjust force. But the other insists that an absolute justice is prevalent in the world where people are being dealt with according to their demeanors.

5.4 Discrepant Representation of Love

These two writers do not share also the views about the role played by the emotion of love in human life. Hardy's characters ruin peace of their lives by getting indulged in love but, for Coelho's characters, this human passion proves to be a nourishing one.

Hardy has depicted love as a detrimental and destructive force that creates grave problems for human beings. His characters fall in love to make their wretched lives graceful. But it proves to be a venomous passion that brings ironical consequences by making their lives more miserable. It does not have any remedial role to play in their

lives instead it engenders conflicts among them that aggravate the situation. Clym falls in love with Eustacia and marries her in spite of his mother's disapproval. He thinks that she would help her to establish and run a school in the heath. But, contrary to his expectations, she deters him from his plan and provokes him to return to the glamorous life of Paris. Furthermore, she proves to be the cause of a severe clash between Clym and his mother that results in their separation. Tess is another victim of the devastating passion that makes her life pitiable. Her love for Clare does not allow her to be at ease because of his indifferent attitude towards her. He deserts her after knowing that she has been defiled by Alec D'Urberville. Eventually, she kills Alec for having abused Clare and gets death punishment as the repercussion of her crime. This is how love shows its devastating facet in Hardy's world.

Love is assigned an opposite role in the world created by Coelho in his novels. Here it has a constructive role to play in man's life. Santiago's beloved, Fatima, persuades him to carry on his journey to Pyramids to find out the treasure hidden there. She encourages him to complete his mission instead of obstructing his way. Same is the case with Esther who persuades her husband to write book and make full use of his abilities as a writer. Later on, her love enables her husband to pursue her and attain his self-realization during his effort of searching her. These are the examples that authenticate the proposition that love is depicted as a constructive force by Coelho.

The incongruity between Hardy's and Coelho's depiction of love is a conspicuous phenomenon. They look at it from different angles and it appears to them differently. For Hardy, it is a ruinous passion that has the function of spoiling man's life and

distracting him from his right path. On the contrary, Coelho takes it as a positive power that is a source of reinforcement for man.

5.5 Difference with Reference to Outcome of the Pursuit of Seeking Self

The result of human beings' endeavour to attain self-realization is one of the other points about which both the writers are found to have dissimilar stances and conflicting ideas. Hardy never let his characters to realize their dreams but Coelho's characters always attain self-realization.

In Hardy's novels, it is a useless thing to struggle to attain self-realization or to know the meaning of one's life. Clym returns to his native land to live in his natural abode. He wants to satisfy his conscience by educating the ignorant people of the heath. But he fails to realize his dream for which he has abandoned the luxurious life of Paris. Eustacia's desire to live freely in accordance with her wishes does not achieve appeasement. She lives in the clutch of the heath that does not allow her to get rid of its manacles. Likewise, Tess craves to live a peaceful life enjoying conjugal love with her lover, Clare. Her wish, like that of Hardy's other characters, remains a mere fantasy. So, all the characters in Hardy's world, fail to attain self-realization and to know the meaning of their lives.

Coelho's characters, unlike that of Hardy, always realize their true selves and grasp the meaning of their existence in the world. Santiago travels from Andalusia to Egypt to find his treasure and during his journey he attains self-realization, the meaning of life, and his love, Fatima. Also Esther and her husband get the knowledge of the meaning of their existence and become aware of their true selves after struggling for a

long period. All these characters successfully accomplish the process of self-realization and acquire the perception of the nature of their lives in the world.

The issue of self-realization is one of the points where both the writers have differed in their conclusions. It remains a dream for Hardy's characters to live in compliance with their propensities and reach the point where they could claim that their conditions and their ambitions are in a congruous position. Discordant view is expressed by Coelho in this respect. He does not let his characters, except the ones who themselves are not ready to pursue their dreams, to be failed in their pursuits of self-realization. He always makes them be fully aware of the meaning of their lives and attain self-realization.

5.6 Dissimilar Views Apropos of the Role of Personified Natural Objects

Both the writers have tendency to personify the inanimate objects of nature to play a vital role in man's life. These personified objects appear as the major characters in their novels. But the role assigned by the one writer to these personified objects is altogether different from the role assigned to them by the other.

Hardy has made use of this technique in his novels and given life to lifeless natural entities. Egdon Heath is the best instance of his proficiency of wielding the literary device of personification. Egdon Heath appears in *The Return of the Native* as a living character who dominates the action of the novel. It is one of the most operative powers in the novel. Its role is to extirpate human beings' plans of safe survival and precipitate their tragic end. Its amity with civilization is described by Hardy concisely:

“civilization was its enemy” (2006: 5). So, Hardy’s personified objects are adversaries of humanity.

Coelho’s novels also contain personified characters but they have a different kind of function than Hardy’s personified objects. They are the representatives of generous nature who help human beings in order to make them complete their missions. Sahara desert, the sun, and the air, existent in *The Alchemist*, are the examples of the use of the technique of personifications. All the three objects help Santiago during his journey in search of the treasure. They assist him to show the tribal chieftains that he could transform himself into air, the demonstration that saves his life.

The peculiar contrariety of approach is shown also at this point. Both of them have personified natural elements and made them take part in life as human characters. But they have assigned totally opposite roles to their personified objects. While Hardy’s personified characters are found obstructing man’s passage, Coelho’s personified characters are found helping man to advance towards their destination safely. At this point, one finds them to be standing at one place with their backs turned towards each other.

5.7 Similar Humanistic Disposition

Since both the writers are dealing with the same theme, the theme of human condition, it is natural for them to have some affinities with reference to their dealing of the theme. So, there are some features shared by these two novelists. One of these features is their philanthropic attitude towards humanity. Though they differ in their interpretations of man’s condition, they have the same kind of love for humanity.

Hardy's love for humanity is all pervasive in the texts of his novels. Although he considers the world to be a crucible for human beings where they are having a wretched existence, he does not despise humanity. His novels, the selected ones, are full of denunciations but the denunciation is not of humanity instead it is the denunciation of eternal forces that are responsible, according to him, for the pitiable predicament of humanity. He considers that if there had been some benevolent controlling power in the universe, life would have been a happy one. He loves his Clym, Eustacia, Tess, Clare and others in spite of recognizing their blunders.

Coelho, like Hardy, has shown a deep love for humanity in his novels. His characters, presented in the selected novels, are representatives of his philanthropic propensity. He gives the message to humanity to be aware of their inherent goodness and utilize it for the prosperity of itself. He incites man to go ahead and achieve his goal that is waiting for him to come. He wants man to be prosperous and happy. Man's triumph is the most cherished theme for him.

So, the love for humanity is one of the very few similarities that are to be found in Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition. Although they differ in their interpretations of human condition, they share the loving attitude towards humanity. Hardy supposes that humanity is in miserable condition and gets dejected; Coelho observes that humanity is prosperous and gets jubilant. But whatever is the cause of their philanthropic disposition, the fact remains incontrovertible that they love humanity whole-heartedly. Both of them are staunch humanitarians who have expressed their love for humanity in their works.

5.8 Similitude Concerning Belief in Marvellous

In the wake of modernism, belief in marvellous and supernatural forces has vanished and considered to be the matter of irretrievable past. The modern man has started to strictly disbelieve all the irrational and illogical phenomena. To the people of the modern world, the words *real* and *logical* have become synonymous. But both of the writers believe in the existence of supernatural forces and supra-rational phenomena.

Hardy, in this respect, goes against the zeitgeist of his era and shows an undaunted belief in *unbelievable*.³ He recurrently refers to the influence of supernatural forces on human beings and exhibits his belief in superstitions. For example, when Clare and Tess, after their wedding, are about to leave the farm, they hear “the crowing of a cock” and a man standing at the gate comments “that’s bad” (Hardy 2008: 246). This is because, according to the superstition, if a cock crows at afternoon proceeding marriage, it is a bad omen and the married couple is going to face evil consequences of their marriage. The superstition proves to be factual in case of the marriage of Clare and Tess.

Coelho, too, believes that supernatural forces are present in the world and these powers play a major role in life of man. The old king, one of the major characters of *The Alchemist*, is a supernatural creature. He comes to help the people who are courageously endeavouring to materializing their dreams. He has occult powers of transforming himself into anything he likes to be.

It is obvious that belief in the existence of marvellous is another nexus that is to be found in Hardy’s and Coelho’s visions of man’s predicament in the world. Both the novelists have incorporated marvellous, supernatural, and superstitious elements in their

novels. They have presented supernatural forces to be participating in man's affairs and influencing the outcome of his efforts.

The comparative study of Hardy and Coelho's visions of human condition has brought forth the similarities and the contrasts that are present in the selected novels of the writers. There is an obvious disagreement of ideas between both the writers concerning the nature of human life in the world. There are glaring contrasts between the opinions of the writers about matters like man's potency and fate, the existence of poetic justice or violation of this ideal situation, nature of love, the fruit of the pursuit of seeking self, and the role of natural forces in human affairs. They have expressed their views about these issues in exactly the opposite terms. There do exist few similarities, their love for humanity and their belief in marvellous, but these become insignificant in comparison with the abundance of contrasts on several crucial matters. Both of the writers have created fictional worlds in accordance with their peculiar philosophy of life and given them patterns that appear in their minds regarding the real world. They have tried to inculcate their ideas into the readers' mind through their novels. Concisely, the philosophical approaches of both the writers regarding human condition are incompatible and irreconcilable.

Notes

1. The attention is wholly concentrated on only the selected novels of both the writers. All the generalizations are based on the selected works; the other fictional works of the writers are not considered in the study.
2. The contrast of their visions is exactly identical with that of Wordsworth and Tennyson. Norman Page, describing the contrast of Wordsworthian and Tennysonian ideas, says:

For Wordsworth, a poet much admired by Hardy, at the beginning of the century, nature was amoral guide and a source of wholesome influences: humanity could and should live in harmony with nature. But Tennyson, at the mid-century, famously characterized nature as 'red in tooth and claw', with its creatures existing in a state of relentless and competitive savagery: humanity was admirable only in so far as it had risen above the brutal appetites of the natural world. (2001: 59)

If the names Wordsworth and Tennyson are replaced with Coelho and Hardy, the passage would be an apt one in that case, too.

3. Hardy has gone against the zeitgeist of his age by showing his firm faith in marvellous as his belief is an unscientific one and "*Science was central to Victorian culture*" (Mallett 2004:156).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this concluding portion is to summarily describe the findings and results of the research. For this purpose, all the features of Hardy's and Coelho's visions, considering their reciprocal affinities and the divergences, are considered on the basis of the critique developed and the comparative analysis done in the foregoing chapters. Answers of both the research questions and verification of the hypothetical assumption about the contrasting nature of Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition are sought.

Resolution of the Research Questions

While inaugurating the study, two research questions were put forth to be answered in this research. Both the questions are tackled in the study and their answers are provided through the textual analysis and the comparative study of Hardy's and Coelho's selected novels.

The first and foremost question, tackled by the study, is about the nature of human condition and creative writers' approach towards the understanding of it. In this study, to understand the nature of human condition, the researcher has concentrated on two selected creative writers: Thomas Hardy and Paulo Coelho. Both of the writers have explicitly expressed their views about the complex and enigmatic nature of human condition in the cosmic order. They have endeavoured to understand the meaning of human existence by depicting human life in their works in accordance with the patterns

that appear in their minds regarding it. They have incorporated their peculiar perceptions of human life into their creative works. Their novels are not only the expressions of their understandings of the meaning of human life but also a source of the enhancement of perception for their readers. They themselves have approached human condition from their idiosyncratic perspective and made their readers to perceive the phenomenon from the same side. This study is also an expression of the fact that creative writers' conclusions about the nature of human condition are not always concordant. Sometimes there is concordance among them about the problem and sometimes there is an absolute discordance.

The second question that has been answered is apropos of the similarities and the differences that exist between visions of both the writers. The fact is made clear by the comparison based on the minute textual analysis that there is a paucity of similarities between the two writers and they have differences about almost all the major issues concerning human condition in the cosmic order. They have expressed contrasting ideas about the issues like the nature of human life in the cosmic order, human potency and the role of fate, the concept of poetic justice, representation of love, outcome of the pursuit of seeking self, and presentation of the personified natural objects. Although there are some similarities, basically, these writers have presented dissimilar and contrasting interpretations of the state of human affairs in the world.

Despite major differences, some similarities are indispensable to be found because of unanimity of the theme. The most conspicuous similarity between them is their philanthropic attitude towards humanity. They consider man to be a lovable creature instead of taking him as a loathsome and abhorrent one. Furthermore, both of

them share the belief in the existence of supernatural. They believe that supernatural powers play an important role in human affairs. At these two points, both the writers have same kind of attitudes.

It is evident that the research questions have been answered through the analysis of the selected texts and the comparison of Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition. The approaches of both the creative writers apropos of human existence are meticulously described. The similarities and the differences of their visions are brought forth by studying their works side by side.

The Corroboration of the Hypothetical Assumption

The hypothetical assumption, presumed in statement of the problem, has been verified that Thomas Hardy's vision of human condition is diametrically opposed and in sharp contrast to that of Paulo Coelho. Moreover, in terms of the problem of human condition, Hardy has a tragic vision as compared to Paulo Coelho who approaches the problem optimistically.

The fact becomes very obvious that Hardy and Coelho have differed in their views at almost every crucial point regarding human predicament. They have dealt with the same theme but approached it from their respective points of view. The existence of some similarities can not be denied but these similarities can not fill the fissure that exists between the philosophical frames of mind of both the writers. These similarities are eclipsed by all pervasive contrasts that exist between their visions.

Hardy's tragic propensity in opposition of Coelho's jubilant proclivity is also evinced by the comparative analysis of the selected texts of both the novelists. Hardy has appeared to be an intractable pessimist who is always inclined to bring forth the extremity of humanity in the world. For him, failure is an ineluctable termination of man's struggle for making his life a happy one. In short, in his world, suffering defeats ease, anguish defeats elation, agony defeats pleasure, and sorrow stands triumphant over happiness. But Coelho's interpretation of human condition in the world is exactly the opposite of Hardy's. For him, life is not a scourge inflicted upon helpless man instead he has taken life as a benefaction for blessed man. He is a zealous disseminator of hope who takes the world as a heavenly and blissful place.

The critical analysis of the selected novels and the comparison of both the novelists, have authenticated the statement and substantiated the stance taken about their visions of human condition. The contrast of their visions has appeared as an obvious phenomenon and tragic propensity of Hardy in contrast with Coelho's optimism is also proved.

A clear picture of the contrasting nature of Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition has emerged as a result of the critique that is developed and the comparison that is made in the preceding chapters. The whole expatiate discussion throughout the study evidences the contrasting nature and irreconcilability of Hardy's and Coelho's visions of human condition in the world. They approach human life in this universal setup from absolutely opposite directions and draw conclusions that are in sharp contrast. Almost all the features of their visions are pointed out and juxtaposed to highlight the contrast of their visions. The existence of some similarities is also

mentioned. Unanimity of their theme has been unable to bring unanimity of ideas between them and, as far as their visions of human condition are concerned, they are poles apart from each other.

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