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Role of Fair in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and pessimism

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Pessimism depicts the darker side of the life. Thomas Hardy is a pessimistic writer. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* depicts the story of Michael Henchard's picaresque journey. Role of fair in this novel expresses the darker side of the life. Hardy's predilection in his plots for coincidences and other unlikely events in defiance of the laws of probability has also tended to disorient readers and dismay critics. Hardy writes predominantly in the realistic mode. He is often apt to stylize the turn of events so as to intensify the emotion, to bend the framework of the plot at points to a poetic plasticity. Some of the more unlikely events in Hardy reveal as much in fact of human psychology as they reveal the hand of fate. The sense of fatalism and tragedy we associate with his name was thus the response of a highly sensitive imagination. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a tragedy, which occurs in the life of common man and rotates his life in a circle of life. In this circle of life 'Fair' plays an important role.

The novel has a more dramatic beginning. In a manner, the crisis is reached in the opening chapter itself. The rest of the painful story boomerangs into tragedy as a result of the initial error. The protagonist of the novel is Michael Henchard and his wife Susan went to Weydon Priors. They had a daughter named Elizabeth Jane. That day was a fair day. Michael Henchard was a hey-trusser. The hey-trusser family proceed to fair field. Many hundreds of horses and ships were in the fair. The auction of few inferior animals were started.

Yet the crowd was denser now than during the more journeymen out for a holiday, a stray soldier or two home on furlough, village shopkeepers, and like, having latterly flocked in; persons whose activities found a congenial field among the peep-shows, toy-stands, wax-works, inspired monsters, disinterested medical men who travelled for the public good thimble-riggers, nick-nack vendors, and readers of Fate. (p.n.4)

In the fair there was furnity-shop. 'Good Furnity Sold Here'. Henchard went there. Susan liked that furnity and happy with thought of nourishment after a long hard day. But man had never tasted it. The young man and woman ordered the furnity. The woman described it as a proper food and also described its preparation with help of the food grains. The man found the concoction, and more satisfaction with the drink. But the wife had observed the proceeding with uneasiness. The man asked more drinks and then he was out of control. He had lost all his money in drinking but he proceed further with his deed. He decided to sell his wife for more drinking. Auction took place and a sailor, Richard Newson bought Susan and her daughter for five pounds. This incident completes the pessimistic side of the fair. Newson took both of them and went to the city. On the next day when Henchard realized his mistake he decided to search them.

The picaresque journey of the Henchard changed his life and he became the Mayor of the city Casterbridge. But through his travelling from place to place he always remembered his mad sell of his wife and daughter. He met Donald Farfrae his another friend. He told him about the fair, the dark story of his life. Donald helped him but afterword he became the next Mayor the city Casterbridge. The story of the fair again created bad luck for the protagonist, Henchard. The furnity woman revealed the secret of the mad sell of the wife and daughter by the protagonist for the furnity. This secret made decline in the life of Henchard and turned his fate.

A hey-trusser became a businessman, then the Mayor, then a prestigious person in the city, afterword again his decline brought him in the village as a hey-trusser. His tragic flaw was the sell of his wife and daughter for the furnity in the fair. The fair culture of the auction made his mind to sell his wife. In the novel one festival is described. In this festival Donald Farfrae realized his love for Elizabeth Jane.

Fair is the representation of rustic life. Fair represents Wessex life which is changeless, rooted and instinctively realistic. The droll remarks and their wisecracks convey a whole down-to-earth philosophy of life. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy is dealing with Wessex countryside. He animated Casterbridge with rural ethos. A good deal of the Wessex ways of life, therefore flows into it, and shapes its character.

References:

1. Hardy, Thomas: *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
2. Hardy, Thomas: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*