Core 311 His. Of English Literature 1890-1939

UNIT 01

C. Thomas Hardy as a Novelist

Keywords:

1. Introduction,

2. Regionalism,

3. Importance of Wessex,

4. Unity of Time and Place,

5. His Idea of Writing,

6. Human Relations and Aspirations,

7. Other Features, etc.

In details:

01. Introduction:

Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 A.D. in the Dorset which is the part of South-western area of England (known as Wessex).

Most of the Hardy's novels are set in his homeland, which, he says, has railways, mowing and reaping, machines illiterate labourers etc. Following are the main features of the works of Thomas Hardy.

02. Regionalism:

The regional novel writing was one of the features of England in the 19th century that was trending and thus the scope of 19th century English Novels is quite narrow as compared to the works of Russia. Hardy wrote regional novels-they are confined to his district. This is because he was well aware of this area.

03. Importance of Wessex:

Hardy's novels were confined to Wessex as for Hardy what happens in Wessex is what happens everywhere in the world. The problems faced by the people of his district are common to the whole of mankind. Thus his novels, though confined to Wessex have universal applications.

Another reason for confining the outlook of his novels was that his district is timeless and unchangeable. It has its own history, culture, superstitions, and dialect. Thus Wessex is itself a character.

04. Unity of Time and Place:

As Hardy's novels have been set in a small area, the characters live near one another and often meet each other. They do not meet accidentally but because they desire to meet each other. Thus one witnesses various co-incidences in Hardy's novels which have often been criticized by the readers.

By limiting the action of the novel to a small and confined area he creates a unity of place. Hardy has even provided the map of the area where the plot of his novels is set. He also wants a unity of time because the action was to take a year and a day.

05. His Idea of Writing:

Hardy, in his novels, does not try to prove anything. He believes that a novel should not argue a case for or against something. But instead, it should be an impression i.e. the writer's impression of life.

The impression of Hardy in The Return of the Native is that family relationships are tragic and that the people who try to rise above their class have to suffer.

06. Human Relations and Aspirations:

Instead of criticizing society, Hardy is interested in human aspirations and relationships. Love, marriage, and family form the central themes of his novels. Hardy was the first novelist to explore a man-woman relationship out of the marriage that caused a scandal in the Victorian Age.

07. Other Features:

His novels were mostly read in the Victorian Age as they portrayed the life and culture of the middle class who had acquired money and had the leisure to read. We also find ample references to Classical writers like Homer, Oedipus, and Sophocles.

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