

The SPL Journal of Literary Hermeneutics

A Biannual International Journal of Independent Critical Thinking
Double-blind Peer-reviewed and Open Access Journal in English



Vol. 4 Issue 2 Monsoon Edition 2024 e-ISSN 2583-1674 Page no. 205-213

www.literaryhrm.org
www.cavemarkpublications.com



Shakespearean Heroines and Thomas Hardy's Heroine Tess – A Portrait

G. Kiran Kumar Reddy
B.S. Selina

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1161-5698>

Corresponding Author: G. Kiran Kumar Reddy, Assistant Professor in RGM College of Engineering & Technology, Nandyal, AP, India, kiran.mokshita@gmail.com

Research Article

Keywords:

Love, Agony, heroine, Tess

Article History

Received:

June 14, 2024

Revised:

July 24, 2024

Accepted:

August 30, 2024



ISSN 2583-1674 (SPLJLH)



Abstract

Aim: *The present study of this paper, highlights the Shakespeare, Hardy's times.*

Methodology and Approaches: *We selected primary sources and secondary sources for the study. For the present study, we used analytical method of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Tempest and Hardy's Tess of the D'urbervilles. Woman is portrayed as an embodiment of endurance and self-sacrifice. It examines the cause of injustices on one particular gender. It throws light on how woman strive and thrive against all odds of the life trying to create a space of her own.*

Outcome: *It portrays the culture, conditions of women and their suffering under patriarchy. It provides some insights, reflection of our lives and society. Literature is a large canvas, many characters could have appeared, but Shakespeare, Hardy's writings inspired many people. Many critics considered both of the writer's penchant for women. Women have their own aspirations, wishes, crave for fulfillment, due to circumstances, sacrifice their needs. It discusses the pain of love, loss of life and struggle. These characters resemble with common people in various arenas, status of the society.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *This paper emphasizes the influence of society on human beings, their culture.*

***Correspondence:** Manjari Johri, mjohri@amity.edu © (2024) All rights are reserved with the author (s) published by CaveMark Publications. This is an Open Access Article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any form or medium, provided that the original work is properly cited or acknowledged. This paper is available online on www.literaryherm.org and it was published by CaveMark Publications, India.

Literature is a mirror of society that reflects historical background. Literature presents an accurate image of contemporary society and its culture. It is a means of expression to share experiences and total concept of life. Literature can alter the thought process of the human beings on the Earth. Women did not take up writing because they had no freedom to express their feelings and suppressions in the male dominated society. But woman has been described and presented in male perspective in their writings. Women had been given less priority and therefore they could not present woman sprang and ready to take the writing as their weapon to express their abundant sufferings for ages. Human beings are gifted with many skills like thinking, inventing and improving. Their intriguing nature makes them different from other living beings. Viola through brain based skills, improves her memory power, perceptual talent, rational thinking and creative concepts.

Story Begins: The heroine of Twelfth Night is Viola, since her assumption of disguise is the motive spring of the plot. Beautiful and modest, affectionate and constant, shrewd and resourceful, faithful and charitable, Viola is an ideal of the beauty and nobility of love. Transparent honesty is hers. To think of the play is to think at once of viola. The whole drama hinges on her fortunes. Viola is a very charming person. Olivia speaks thus, "Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, action and spirit" (Act I Scene V. 275-6).

Viola shows signs of good breeding, she has also accomplishments in music and agreeableness in conversation. Duke Orsino refers to her rubious lips and sweet voice. Ruskin states the Shakespeare's plays are full of heroines than heros. What makes Viola more attractive is her wit and humor. She is sincere and serious with Olivia. She puts on a light behavior with Feste and Maria. She has exchanges of wit with them as well as with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. Feste finds his match in her. Maria is unable to put her down. Viola shows her remarkable insight when Olivia sends her a ring through Malvolio. She expresses her sympathy for rival in the Duke's heart. She asks the duke not to blame olivia for not loving him.

An unprotected maid, she done the garments of a boy, which lead her into difficulties. Her womanish timidity is revealed in the dual scenes. As Mrs. Jameson says, Viola plays her part well, but never forgets nor allows us to forget that she is playing a part. She is the page and the confidant of the Duke. She has to woo a mistress for him, while she herself is in love with him. In this conflict between duty and love, she is true to both. When the Duke threatens to kill her, she is prepared to die. She possesses gratitude and self-sacrificing nature, loyalty and devotion.

Viola's love for the Duke is pure. Her indirect confession of love to him is highly ingenious and poetical. When she is beset by jealous rivals, she becomes pathetic. She is aware of her situation as long as she cannot expose her true nature. A robust optimist, she is hopeful that this would be enhanced by the reappearance of her lost brother. Sebastian wins Olivia. Viola marries the Duke, and lives happily ever afterwards. Her success makes us happy. Viola wins our love and admiration. Her character lends romantic charm to the play.

Olivia is like a princess of romance. She appears more complex a character than Viola. She forms a pendant to the Duke, and a contrast to Viola. She stands at the central point of the whole action. She is a great lady, dignified and competent. Olivia is a woman of unusual energy. At the beginning of the play, she is mourning the death of her father and brother. For seven years she intends to go veiled. Oppressed by melancholy she has abjured the company of men. She is the master of herself. She is virtuous. She can "Sway her house, command her followers."

She is willful and capricious. The manner in which she turns her back on the Duke's suit seems to infer an icy coldness of character. The significance of Viola in the guise of "Cesario" completely transforms Olivia's personality. She becomes suddenly restless and absent minded. She fixes her eyes upon the page and sends him a ring. She invites him to come again. She passes from intense melancholy and resignation to ardent passion. As the action advances, she slowly gains in our estimation.

Her beauty is universally admitted, even her rival, Viola generously admits it. The Duke describes her as Miracle and a queen of gems. She lacks a sense of humor. She becomes a victim to irony of circumstances. And yet she retains her dignity and the grace of her bearing. She hates rudeness. For Instance, she upbraids Sir Toby, who was about to fight Cesario, saying, “Where manners were never preached.”

Olivia treats her servants with sympathy and generosity. She inspires a sentiment of loyalty in them. She rebukes Malvolio when he assumes too much. But she is all kindness to him, when she thinks him to be affected by madness. She is loved by not less than five persons. But by a sudden freak of fortune, she flies into the arms of Sebastian. He is a very good substitute for the image of her affection. The shades of melancholy disappear at the end of the drama and Olivia welcomes Viola in the gracious words “Sister you are she”. Olivia is merely a female edition of the Duke sharing his sentimentalism, impulsiveness, caprice, the pang of unrequited love, the craving for a change and ultimate victory in love.

Olivia and Viola possess certain characteristics in common. Both of them are impulsive. Olivia is of course more impulsive than Viola. Both of them act on the moment’s inspiration. They are thus quite free from psychological riddling and metaphysical half splitting. They are full of youthful buoyancy and the spirit of adventure. Every word spoken by them and every act done by them bears testimony to these facts. But each is a striking foil to the other.

Olivia is in opulent circumstances. She is a countess. But Viola is in adverse circumstances. Her adversity forces her to disguise herself as a man and join the service of Duke Orsino as a page. Olivia is suffering from self-deception. She is in an unreal mood of mourning for her brother. Her wit combats with Feste and her sudden passion for Cesario show this. There is something of the spoiled child about one who despises her. She lacks the frankness, self-control and those of Viola. We, therefore, feel the smallest surprise when her exaggerated grief gives place suddenly to exaggerated passion of love. Viola is imbued with the spirit of fortitude. She is indeed a picture of patience. She has also deep sense of

humor and versatility which enable her extricate herself from all critical situations. Olivia lacks this readiness of defense and rich resourcefulness.

Viola is unquestionably superior to Viola. As a matter of fact, she is most irresistibly lovable character in the play. Shakespeare expends his dramatic art in the portrayal of her character. It is her wit that ultimately controls the destinies of all the main characters in the play. Hence, she is universally acclaimed as the heroine of this most brilliant romantic comedy. To think of 'Twelfth Night' is at once to think of Viola. Miranda is a beautiful daughter of Prospero. She is a compassionate, shows mercy a Ferdinand's physical toiling task which is assigned by her father. She mesmerizes Ferdinand with her enchanting beauty. She is a good individual possessing independent thinking capabilities. By witnessing the ship wreck she speaks these words at her father, "O brave new world". Miranda is beloved daughter in the eyes of Prospero. He adores her a lot and her gracious smile made him vigorous. She expresses her dissent against Caliban cruel deeds at her father. "T is a villain, sir." As an empathizer, Miranda implores her father to prevent ship storm in the beginning of the play. She maintains teacher –student mateship with her father and learns life skills. She imbibes informative approach of her father. Ferdinand beholds Miranda loves her at first sight. Miranda shows superiority and states her emotions. "I am your wife if you will marry me." Miranda undergoes colonialism by staying 12 years along with her father in an isolated island. When Caliban tries to molest her experiences patriarchal oppression. The Tempest highlights colonialism, women rights through Miranda. Caliban tires to usurp the chastity of Miranda, shows threat to rules of civilized society.

Prospero, the Duke of Milan, and his only daughter, Miranda, are introduced at the beginning of the play. The story of Prospero before he came to the enchanted island is narrated in the form of a retrospect. He loved his daughter. The play opens with the ship-wreck, a description of the despair of the enemies of Prospero. From the shore, Prospero and Miranda watched the trials and tribulations of the ship and its crew. Miranda, who had a sympathetic heart she asked her father, if he had created the storm to allay the waters and save the ship.

Prospero assured her that no harm had been done to anybody. Then in the form of a retrospective narration, he told Miranda the story of his life up to that moment he also added that all his enemies were now at his mercy. The love of Ferdinand for Miranda was fast growing. Prospero had asked him to carry logs of wood. But Miranda sympathized with him. So he felt no difficulty at all. She offered to help him but he would rather break his muscles than accept the offer. Then followed a mutual declaration of love between them.

Prospero's heart overflows with love. His love for Miranda is boundless and he lives for her alone. It has cheered him in his darkest hours and helped him to endure many a hardship. His address to her is always in tender language; she is loved darling, dear heart, a rich gift etc. The proudest, happiest moment of his life was that in which he saw her united wedlock to the man of her heart.

In the final act of the play, the royal party is led to Prospero by the spellbound music of Ariel. Prospero forgives the king and restore his duke ship. Alonso feels very happy to know that his son is not dead. He is taken to the cave, and there he sees Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. When Ferdinand tells his father that he has taken Ferdinand for his wife. Alonso forgets the past and blesses the couple.

Thomas Hardy's Tess is considered to be the noblest of Hardy's heroines. She is a great tragic figure and seems to have been born under an evil star. Fate played a crucial role for her sufferings in her life. But she undergoes agony with dignity and comes out as a fine figure and pure woman. As an elder daughter of Jack Durbeyfield, she handles the situations, trivial and tribulations meticulously.

In her tender age, despite of poverty she shows great responsibility towards family consisting of nine members. One morning, while she is driving the family cart to the market, a mail carriage collides with her cart. The family loses horse and business, leads to miserable conditions in their family. Tess shoulders the burden and sudden financial problems of the family. she goes unwillingly to Trantridge to claim kinship with a rich D' Urberville lady, turning point of her life.

In Trantridge, she meets Alec D'urberville, immoral person. Alec is fascinated by her beauty and tries to seduce her. She resists all his evil doings, becomes victim in the hands of Alec. She loses her chastity, feels disgraced. She delivers a child but within short span of time child dies. Tess again goes to work for her earnings, joins as a dairy maid at Talbothay and meets Angel Clare. Mutual love ripens in between Alec and Tess. She considers herself unworthy and unfortunate past.

She rejects Angel's love proposal at first, later agrees to marry him. Her conscience does allow her to marry him without telling him about her past. She reveals her past through a letter to Angel. Angel does not notice the letter hidden under the carpet. On the wedding night Angel reveals his love affair with an elderly woman and requests her to pardon him. By the moment Tess narrates her past, shocked angel separates from Tess.

Tess suffers a lot; her master Flintcomb Ash treats very cruelly. The death of her father adds to her miseries. The family undergoes mental pain by losing land, home. She goes to her parents in law house to meet Angel. Unfortunately, she does not meet them and disappointment looms in her life. Alec again enters her life, promises to look after her family members, she finally surrenders to Alec and agrees to live with him. But when Angel comes back to her she becomes upset. When Alec speaks about Angel in an insulting manner, in a fit of anger she murders Alec. She again shifts her love towards Angel, her joy is short lived. She receives death penalty for murder and faces death without any fear. In Tess Hardy portrays the agony and frustration of an agricultural community and extinction of an old culture which had given continuity in a tradition. While the traditional families delayed, upstart families like D'urbervilles prospered in the new dispensations. Tess is a sad tale of an innocent girl and depicts the sad peasantry in a period of transition.

Works Cited and Consulted

- Gay, P. (2008) The Cambridge introduction to Shakespeare's comedies, Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, J.D. (1962) Shakespeare's happy comedies.
- Shakespeare, W. Kean, C.J. Booth, E., & Edmonds, T.W. (1936) Twelfth night, or, what you will, Pellegrini & Company.
- Williamson, M.L. (1986) The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies. Wayne State University Press.
- Hawkins, S. (1967) The Two Worlds of Shakespearean Comedy, Shakespeare Studies,3,62.
- Gerlach, J., Almsy, R., & Daniel, R. (1996), Revisiting Shakespeare and gender. Chesterton, G.K. The Victorian Age in Literature, London; Oxford University Press ,1961. 8. Hazen, James. The Tragedy of Tess of Duebeyfield, 1969.
- Kettle, Arnold. Tess as a Moral Fable in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, London: W.W. Norton &Company, 1965.
- Mallet, Phillip ed. Thomas Hardy: Text and Contexts, London: Palgrace ,2002.

Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy

Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy received Doctorate from Sri Venkateswara University in Indian Literature. He began his career with passion. He has published number of articles in reputed UGC Care, Scopus and Wos Journals. He delivered many lectures on English language, soft skills, literature and communications skills. He authored Two Books. At present he is working as Senior Assistant Professor in RGM College of Engineering & Technology, Nandyal, AP.

Dr. B S. Selina

Dr. B S. Selina who is an Academic officer in the Academic Cell of the AP state council of Higher education, Mangalagiri, AP is now working on deputation in the AP Public service commission. She taught English in Government Institutions and later worked as an Academic Administrator. She was awarded M.Phil for her

work in British Literature and Ph.D in Post-Colonial Literature. She also completed a 5-week online course on shaping the way we teach English, paths to success in English.