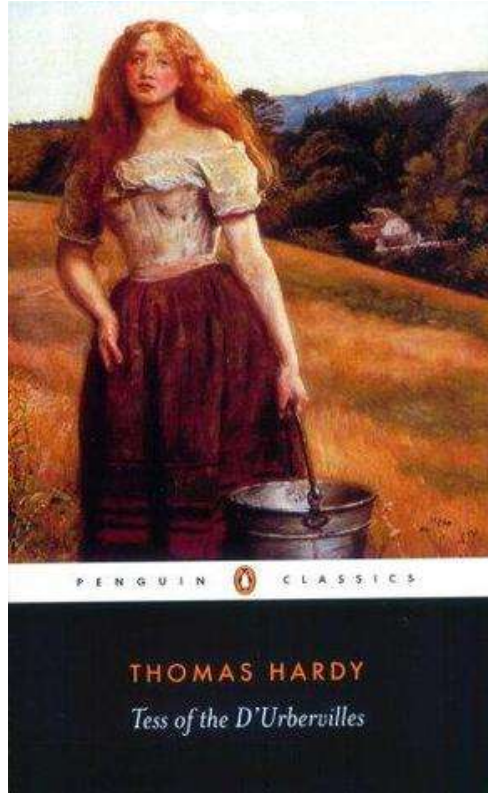


Impact of Class on Life
A Marxist Study of Thomas Hardy's Novel
Tess of the D'Urbervilles

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Abstract

Class has central role in Hardy's works, specially in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess, the protagonist and the representative of 19th century social class is exploited in this novel by the members of elite class. In spite of all other themes the novel is about the experiences that a working class does in order to hide or shift its class and to minimize the gap that has become a source of exploitation.

In class shifting process Tess's mother, her father and Tess herself plays a vital role that will become part of discussion later in this paper. However, major source of exploitation is economy, which acts as a venomous tool not only for Tess's destruction but for her whole family

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also. Tess throughout the novel is struggling between intractable material satisfaction and self.

Further, it is essential to highlight that Hardy has told the story of Tess in the same socioeconomic background in which he himself was living and experiencing such types of bitter realities. There lies vivid comparison between his world and in Tess's world. The only difference is that, Tess being a female is a double standard of exploitation. It is worth mentioning that, Hardy was producing class literature by choosing his protagonists from working classes because he was of the view, if there does not exist any literature for working class, it will be diminished from the history and become a permanent source of exploitation. Further there is a great influence of Marx's philosophy with the dominant aspect of "each according to his abilities to each according to his needs", and that "whole hitherto history is the history of working class", and above all "philosophers have interpreted the world; our aim is to change it".

In this way this research paper is going to highlight in overall, the issue of class. It will take Marxist literary theory as a lense to analyse this work. Paper will also highlight the factors that are responsible in class making process and purposes or motives of these different classes.

Key Terms:

Marxism, Class, Dialectical Model of History, Ideology, Alienation

Marxism

Karl Marx, a German Philosopher, and Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, were the joint founder of this school of thought .They forwarded their economic theory and gave it the name of Communism. Marx and Engels announced the advent of communism in their jointly-written Communist Manifesto of 1848.The pin points of Marxism are:

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it".

"It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, but on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness" (Seldon, 1985:23).

. The second fact is further elaborated by Karl Marx himself of what it means when he says

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that social being determines social consciousness? Marx answers this question quite clearly. He says:” the first premise of all human history is of course, the existence of living human individuals(social being).Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature (Gondal *et al.*, 2006: 27).

Marxism or scientific socialism is the body of ideas which provide a fully worked-out theoretical, basis for the struggle of the working class to attain a higher form of human society Socialism. Whether Marxism is considered a philosophy, a theory, a method or a movement is of little concern its role is to change the world. (Berry, 1992:157).

It can also be taken as a materialist philosophy, one which insists upon the primacy of material living conditions rather than ideas or beliefs in the life of human beings. It sees history as, in Marx’s words, “The history of class struggle”- the history of struggle for control of the material conditions upon which life rests. It is on the basis of these material conditions, and in response to the struggle for them, that ideas, philosophies, mental pictures of the world, develop –as secondary phenomenon.

For Marxists, all is in movement and – because there is no separate or pure realm of ideas, or values, or spiritual Phenomenon- all is interconnected, however complex .Marx, a characteristics form: or dialectical rather than a mechanical and purely hierarchical one .And this open up the possibility for human beings, to gain at least partial control over their life circumstances: Marxism has traditionally been an active and interventionist philosophy , not a spectatorial or passive one, in this way it is also called anti-essentialist philosophy (Paul and Hawthorn,2001: 185).

Class

Class is a large group of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labor and consequently by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and their mode of acquiring it. He also says, class is the manifestation of economic differentiation.”

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Marx divides history into several periods, for example, ancient civilization, feudalism, and capitalism. These periods are characterized by a predominant mode of production, and, based upon it, a class structure consisting of ruling and oppressed class. The struggle between these classes determines the social relations between men. Hence tensions and conflicts between these classes lead to a revolutionary reorganization of society (Bendix, R and Lipser, M.S.Edi. 1976:06).

Marx, explaining the organization of production as the basic determinant of social class, believes that work is man's basic form of self-realization. Man cannot live without work: hence the way in which man works in society is a clue to human nature. He uses tools to facilitate his labor and make it more productive. He has an interest and capacity for elaborating and refining these tools, and so doing he expresses himself, controls nature and makes history. If human labor makes history, then an understanding of the means of production is also necessary to understand history. Production, thus has four aspects, which explain why man's efforts to provide for his subsistence underlie all change in history:

“Life involves before everything else eating, drinking, habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act of this production is to satisfy these needs”.

“The second is, with these needs many new needs arise”.

“Third is, the needs multiply when a man develops his relation with his wife, parents and children, the Family. Family with other social relations develops new needs.”

Fourth is the production of life; on one hand it is a natural; on the other it a social relationship. By “social” cooperation of several individuals is meant. In conclusion, certain mode of production is always combined with a certain mode of cooperation and this mode of cooperation is itself a productive force. And multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society; hence that history of humanity must always be studied and treated in relation to history of means of production.

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It seems a logical connection between these four aspects. The satisfaction of man's basic needs makes work a fundamental fact of human life, but it also creates new needs. The more needs are created the more important is it that the "instruments" of production be improved. Then the importance is of cooperation, first within the family, then outside it. Cooperation implies the division of labor and the organization of production which the individual occupies in the social organization of production that indicates to what social class he/she belongs (08).

The development of the term *class* was a good thing to understand the confusions of the period of 1780-1848. This period included the radical ideas of French Revolution, Rise in Population, the intensification of the enclosure movement, the development of factory systems and the growth of towns. The effect of these changes was to undermine the idea of society as a harmonious hierarchy and the term class seemed more appropriate.

But Days Gary describes that in the seventeenth century the word class was entered in English languages for the first time (Gary, 2001:113).

Marx distinguishes classes as following:

- 1 The Proletariat
- 2 The Bourgeois
- 3 The Landlord

Marx located the source of this conflict in the fact that one class owned the means of production, while the other class owns nothing but their labor power, which they were obliged to sell in order to survive. He therefore explained class in economic terms. The means of production were the land, factories and machinery, whereas labor power was simply skills or strength of workers to undertake specific tasks. Marx called the class Bourgeois who owned the means of production such as machinery and factory buildings and whose source of income was profit. The class who sold their labor power for wages is proletariat. The Bourgeois, in order to make a profit paid the workers the lowest possible wages while demanding that they attain the highest level of productivity. Landlord is a class whose people were historically important. He

defines this class, the class which owns land and derives its income from ground rent. Once powerful and dominant class; but having lost its central role in the production organization of society considered them marginal. In order to retain their wealth some of the landowners were able to transform their wealth into capital, landlord capital different from industrial capital. This class can be defined also as a class whose income is rent (Rummel, 2010:02).

Marx further elaborated that workers are not simply passively shaped by society. Capitalism, because it is a form of society based on exploitation, that is, on the contradiction between capital and labor, gives rise to the class struggle. The effect of this struggle is to transform the working class. The experience of struggle makes workers aware that their interest differs from those of the capitalists. Everything depended ultimately on the consciousness, organization and confidence of the working class. The general rules of the International Working Men's Association, written by Marx, begin with the words; the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves (Callonicos, 1983:113).

However, it is also necessary to know, how and when these classes were developed, and to study Victorian history can be helpful in this regard. The Victorian age was an age of material advancement and industrial progress. The industrial revolution transformed the agricultural economy of England into an industrial economy. Factories were established all over England. Large scale production brought about the creation of new classes of capitalists and laborers (Johri, 1987: 263).

Growing industrialization and mechanization increased life considerably and affected human relations, the professions due to this there were new opportunities for the working classes. Important cultural and social structures were introduced because the existing formats were considered inadequate by the culture of industry. As the condition of English novels show, the rhetoric of mechanization impacted necessary social spheres like education and religion.

Another socially significant move was the policy of state supported education adopted by the governments of the Victorian age. With educational opportunities being extended to the lower classes, the claim for political rights was mounted with greater vigour.

Even though the questioning about women's position in a patriarchal society had begun during the enlightenment it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that a strenuous movement for rights and votes found momentum. One example of such tradition, where male identity worked as a more powerful agency than the female is exemplified by the Bronte's sisters adoption of names that did not give away their female identity when they first approached publishers with their works. We find another example about George Eliot's identity.

An average Victorian woman was considered to be best suited for the life of domestic activities and as the benefits of an industrial society occurred, the recruitment of domestic help may have lessened the burden of the woman but did nothing to unshackle the patriarchal structures. Men's jobs or those professions seen as being conducive to men such as employment in factories and offices were not approached by women. The presence of Victorian work ethic in a twentieth century text only suggests the pervasiveness of such cultural structure (Choudhury, 2005: 225).

The darkest shadow to have fallen over the nineteenth century was the harsh and often brutal treatment of Britain's laboring classes and especially of the women and children who made up so many of its numbers. The poorest classes, despite the mitigating causes of their reduced circumstances, were looked upon as a drain to the public purse, and even the lot of able country laborer and his family was a hard one.

On the other hand, the industrial revolution allowed for the production of large quantities of reasonably priced fabric, allowing women from the middle class to follow new changes in fashion. Seamstresses became much in demand, and for girls from the lower classes, entering the dress making field was seen as a step toward bettering oneself. Nearly two thousands land enclosures act were passed between 1802 and 1844, encircling over six million acres, which represented roughly one –quarter of the cultivated land in England. Enclosure commissioners, who divided parcels off and after they had been enclosed, were respectful of the rights of those land owners who had legal title to the land (Hughes, 1998:115).

The rise in the scale of organization was not only an effect of the increasing division of labor, it was also the cause of a further division of labor as management itself became more complex and was further divided into production, purchasing of materials, accounting, design and engineering, quality serving and eventually industrial relations.

A class society reached its zenith the working class after the relative quiescence of the mid Victorian, social peace rose once again in a resurgence of class consciousness and class conflict. The distinctiveness of a working class way of life was enormously accentuated Its separateness and impermeability were now reflected in a dense and inward looking culture, whose effect was both to emphasize the distance of the working class from the classes above it and to articulate its position within an apparently permanent social hierarchy (Perkin,1989: 122).

The classic interpretation of the mid-Victorian period in the history of the working class movement was laid down by the webs in their history of trade unionism. Surveying the trade union world in the late 1840s, they described the emergence of a new spirit characterized by an acceptance of various aspects of middle class ideology- individualism, respectability, self-help and self-improvement. In the Webb's account the new model trade unionist was a respectable working man, imbued with the middle class economics and middle class values. G.D.H Cole, in his magisterial works of synthesis, described a similar shift in outlook in the working class movement in the whole: The new cooperation of 1844, the new unionism of 1850, the new friendly society movement... were all signs of this changed spirit - all attempts to work with and within the capitalist order instead of seeking its overthrow. The nub of Cole's interpretation was the total domination of mid Victorian society and culture by a newly ascendant capitalist class: Everything thus tended to impress on the working class organization, the Victorian era the mode and character dominant in Victorian era itself- a mood of acquisitiveness, which measured man by money and reckoned virtues largely in monetary terms.

The monochromatic picture painted by the Webs has been modified by recent scholarship, which has depicted the mid Victorian working man as a more complex and interesting figure.

The situation of working class in mid Victorian urban culture provides more than enough material to satisfy the contemporary historians applied for vagueness and absurdity. On the other hand the mid Victorian cities were the scene of continual class conflict, which manifested itself socially and ideologically. There was considerable working class resistance to the middle class and its pretensions. Yet criticism of middle class propaganda was often accompanied by an affirmation of values, which corresponded closely to official platform rhetoric, and working class militancy assumed forms which were congruent with a culture that presupposed middle class pre-eminence. These apparently contradict characteristics are reflected into successive sentences in a letter which Marx wrote to Engels after attending a working class meeting in London in 1863. On the one hand Marx noted that the worker themselves spoke excellently with a complete absence of bourgeois rhetoric and without in the least concealing their opposition to capitalists. Yet in the next breath he expressed the hope that English workers would soon, free themselves from their apparent bourgeois infection; thus Marx noticed not only characteristics of mid Victorian working men, but also traits which were momentarily forgotten (Tholfsen,1976: 12, 29)..

The period of the Napoleonic wars and the economic crises which succeeded it, is the blackest chapter in the whole history of the British working class. Driven from the land by enclosures more redundant or exposed to relentless persecution because of the fears engendered in the mind of governing classes, both by the misery and by “a full portent” of the revolution in France, and inward in the hideous, stinking purlieus of the new factory towns, the workers underwent a long agony, from which they emerged at length exhausted and docile, into the Victorian era. In this age of misery, and as the child of misery, the British labor movement was born (Smelser, 2006:15).

Dialectical Model of History

Hegel observed that society is moving from idea towards matter through a constant process of evolution. Marx developed his critique of Hegel’s dialectic into what he calls the materialistic conception of history, in which there is constant evolution of society through the process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. For example, to understand his point of view Capital

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which is a force is thesis and labor is antithesis, this leads to struggle which is synthesis (Sinha, 1999:92).

Like Hegel, Marx viewed the world, human beings, and history as driven by an absolute spirit of God, but he insisted that the dialectic of history was motivated by material forces, by upheavals in the forces and relations of economic production. In particular he viewed history as driven by class struggle. As he claims in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848): “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle”. Marx alludes to the history of class conflict from ancient world to his own times: between slaves and freemen, patricians and plebians, lords and serfs. The major class conflict in modern times is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat or industrial working class. And, just as the capitalist mode of production superseded the feudal mode, so the capitalist mode will be superseded by socialism.

It is also important to note Marx’s point of view that, it is bourgeois itself which creates the instrument of its own destruction: the proletariat on the one hand, increasingly destructive economic crises which are internal to the operations of capitalism.

Finally, Marx opposed previous philosophical systems as they were idealistic; and said that the given economic and political system cannot be abolished by mere thought but by revolution. With this pre-occupation of the materialistic ideas in his mind he declared that “it is not the consciousness of man that determines their existence, but their social existence determines their consciousness”. He thought that the system of bourgeois dominance and capitalist exploitation would end when conditions for the great mass of people had sufficiently deteriorated (Habib, 2006:530).

Ideology

Ideology is the ideas of ruling class who seeks to perpetuate the prevailing order of capitalism and their own privileged position. For Marx ideology was false consciousness a set of beliefs that obscured the truth of the economic basis of society and the violent operation that capitalism necessarily entails (Ikram, edi. 2010:01).

Gramsci theorized the ways in which people conspire in or consent to prevailing ideological values. As he describes election campaigns a place where we might look for contemporary ideological formations, these ideological formation which people deceptively develop, he gave it the name of Hegemony, another name for constructed ideology.

Louis Althusser (a Marxist) observed ideology as a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. He got this idea from Lacan and Gramsci, who discussed the relationship between ideology and hegemony, as mentioned above (Murfin and Ray, 1998:05).

Goldstein Philip describes Louis's distinction of the state division into Ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses (Goldstein, 2005:27).

Ideological state apparatuses are law, religion, political parties, media, family, churches etc). The ideas of these institutions are accepted by the repressive workers consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly. These repressive state apparatuses are (courts, prisons, police, army, common people etc).Ideological state apparatuses work as agents ensuring the ruling class unity.

Following Althusser, Macherey finds crucial: consciousness from the very beginning a social product and remains so as long as men exist at all. Ideology then involves the relation through which individual subjects make sense of or rationalize the world around them. This analysis of the functioning of ideology enables us to understand the ways in which social relations are reproduced through ideology's ability to shape, and indeed to perform the conscious desires and beliefs of individuals. This is the object world, constructing its reality in specific ways (Tallack, 1987:184).

Base and Superstructure

Means and method of production and the social relationships engender base of the people. Superstructures are the institutions (Politics, churches, schools, media etc) that are determined by base.

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In the way it can be said, means of Production are directly linked with class determining Process. Hence the realms of ideology, politics, law, religion and art are not independent but an outflow of people's material behavior (Sinha, 1999:193).

Alienation

Alienation is sense of powerlessness, isolation and meaninglessness experienced by human beings when they are confronted with social institutions and conditions that they cannot control and consider oppressive.

Marx analyzed this process of alienation in capitalist society. According to him alienated labor involves four aspects:

Worker's alienation from the object that he produces,
from the process of production,
from himself,
and from the community of his fellowmen (Taga, 2010:36).

Marx also believed that the alienation of labor was inherent in capitalism and that it was a major psychological deprivation, which would lead eventually towards proletarian revolution. Marx made a contrast between the modern industrial worker and medieval craftsman, and along with many other writers of the period- observed that under modern conditions of production the worker had lost all opportunity to exercise his "knowledge, judgment and will" in manufacturing his product. To Marx this psychological deprivation seemed more significant even than the economic pauperism to which capitalism subjected the masses of workers. Thus, he considers "the extreme division of labor in modern societies a source of alienation, because in this division he does not own the tools with which the work is done, does not own the final product, even not have right to make decisions. In this way, a worker remains worker forever as this capitalist society only provides the resources with which he/she hardly fulfills his/her bread and butter and compelled to do work only with capitalist's tools (Bendix, R and Lipser, M.S.Edi.1976:10).

Class and Marx's Dream of a Classless Society

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Generally and from sociological point of view class is a large group of people, living at the same place and sharing the same conditions, rituals and customs. If we see china from class point of view , it is important to describe that chines have rejected Hobbes's philosophy that man's conditions is the condition of war with everyone against everyone . what chines say, the heart of matter is the need to root out selfishness and bring into existence a selfless, dedicated men whose happiness consist of serving their fellowmen in the fullest sense of the human community (without creating difference b/w them).this is the real thing of their progress and it is the real thing for which Marx also struggled.

Marx's description of class division is not exact sometimes he says two classes and sometimes three. Mostly, he describes two divisions: The capitalist (Bourgeoisie) who owns the means of production and distribution and the proletariat who own nothing but their own labor. Marx had also described the intermediate state such as small capitalists, the petit bourgeoisie and the lumpen proletariat, but he thinks these would be drawn into the ranks of the proletariat. He believed that history is the story of conflict between the exploiting and exploited classes. This conflict repeats again and again and it happens as thesis and antithesis until capitalism is over thrown by the workers and a socialist state is created which is synthesis where there will be no antithesis again (Day, 2001:112).

As a creative thinker and revolutionary, Marx had strongly supported social change. "Philosophers have already interpreted the world; our present task is to change it". From the Marxian point of view, class is not determined by the occupation but by the position an individual occupies in that occupation. For example, if there are two bankers of whom one is manager and the other is cashier, they belong to two different classes though the occupation remains same. He further explains, the relationship between two classes is not only of dominance and subordination but also of exploiting and exploited. In fact workers produce surplus wealth (more wealth), because they prepare everything, but they get wages with which they hardly meet their needs. Instead those who own the means of production are able to use their surplus wealth, as profit. This thing is an essence of exploitation and the major source of conflict and division between classes that has occurred throughout history. The owner uses profit given by the worker and lives a life of leisure. Marx has also pointed out primitive communism, a name he given to

hunting stage, because at that stage man had not any private property. This stage represents a subsistence economy, which means that production only meets to basic survival needs.

“Classes emerge only when the productive capacity of society expands beyond the level acquired for subsistence”.

Marx made the workers conscious to overthrow the thesis of capitalism by the antithesis of organized and unified labor (Woods, 2010:03).

Marx wanted to establish a society known for equality and social coherence. He wanted to see a society free from all types of exploitations. But his thought or concept of a classless society remains as an imagination.

“A classless society devoid of all kinds of exploitation and conflicts is only imaginary”. Such type of society never existed in the past, nor we find it today. Then why and how Marx has this cherish dream in his mind? Because he has seen the pitiable lot of the working people in the initial stage of Industrial Revolution, he was aspiring for a classless society (04).

Marx wanted a society in which the classes with opposing interests like landowners and landless, workers and management, rich and the poor, exploiters and exploited, capitalists and labors etc. are not found. But we all know that classes had been in existence from the very beginning of the history. It is very difficult and time consuming but not impossible task to achieve a classless society.

General Introduction and Impact of Class on Hardy

Hardy was born in 1840 when Victoria was a young queen; he rose from lower rural class to the rank as a major poet, novelist and short story writer. We can find his minute observation in his writings as complex strands of relationship between his writings and his life. He engages with the ideas of his age, developments in science, Darwin’s theory of evolution, revolutionary changes the growth of the radical politics that gave expression to the striving of the working class for equal social status and the effects of the first world war. Finishing his formal education

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at the age of sixteen and then apprenticing with his father as a stonemason, he worked at first on the restoration of churches and from 1862 to 1867 practiced architecture in London. Plagued by ill health most of his life time he lived in Dorset. He began to publish novel in 1870. Hardy married Emma Gifford in 1874. They resided in several rural places in England, finally building a permanent home called Max Gate at Dorchester. His fame as a novelist and poet greatly increased and he was awarded a number of honors including the order of merit, The Gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature. Mrs. Hardy died suddenly with mental illness in 1912. In 1914 Hardy married Florence Dugdale (Harvey, 2000:14, 18).

Education in 19th century responded to many social and economic changes, aiming on 1870 for universal literacy, it also perpetuated social divisions, and for Hardy was inevitably bound up with class issues. He was ambivalent and defensive about his self-education and was bitter about his exclusion from the universities, which were for the financially secure middle class. Hardy also examined how increased social mobility might bring individuals lives by educating people out of their class while exclusion from education might waste lives. He depicted human existence as tragedy determined by powers beyond the individual command; in particular social class was an extremely significant influence on the external pressure on Hardy. He always wanted to reveal realistically all the aspects of love and sexuality in his fiction, a practice that often offended his readers and endangered his literary reputation. In Victorian period the divisions between social classes were at top and to Hardy it mattered intensely because his father was a master mason. That is why he provided the class theme for his first attempt at fiction *The Poor Man and the Lady*. Unlike many other Victorian novelists Hardy opens his work to a variety of interpretations (Widdowson, 1984:39).

Hardy is considered one of England's greatest novelists. His work resembles that of earlier Victorian novelists in technique while in subject matter it daringly violated literary tradition of the age. In contrast to the Victorian ideal of progress, Hardy depicted human existence as a tragedy determined by powers beyond the individual's command, in particular the external pressures of society and the internal compulsions of character. His desire to reveal the underlying forces directing the lives of his characters led him to realistically examine love and sexuality in his fiction, a practice that often offended his readers and endangered his literary

reputation (Adamson and Akhurst, 2009:97).

Hardy once told Lea (his friend) that as a writer he had always striven to attempt description “only of such things as he had actually experienced or learned by actual first hand knowledge (Lea, 1986:36).

Class has remained a debatable issue in every society. Victorian era was also the victim of class due to economic growth and dislocation. Large scale production brought about the creation of new classes of capitalists and laborers. Class was the issue Hardy himself suffered.

Class in Hardy’s Works

Thomas Hardy’s novel has many categories. For example, the novel of character and environment romances and fantasies.

In his novels of character and environment and in many of his poems he tells his readers about class distinction which he observed himself during his time of writing.

Thomas Hardy’s poem the Ruined Maid’ is an example of a conversation b/w two women. The poem calls into question the role of a women and class distinction, which was a prevalent issue at that time (Johnson, 1901:04).

In 1867-68 he wrote a class conscious novel “The poor man and the lady” which was sympathetically considered by three London publishers but never published.

The closing phase of Hardy’s career in fiction was marked by the publication of Tess of the d’Urbervilles (1891) and Jude the obscure (1895), which are generally considered his finest novels. Both these novels offer the sympathetic as well as oppressive (by elite class) representation of working class figures.

Jude Fawley is a stone mason and Hardy traces his character initially hopeful, momentarily overjoyed but steadily troubled and depressive leading towards death.

In this novel the class ridden system of education is challenged by the defeat of the Jude's noble and honest aspirations to knowledge (Stan, 2010: 01).

Similarly in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* the poor Tess from working class is victimized by two elite class members whose hearts were full of cunningness and cruelty and who were merciless. They exploited Tess in every way as, mostly elite classes do with working class. In this way Hardy presents a world in which human spirit is exploited by the forces not of fate but of social hierarchy.

Tess's death shows the most moving indictments of the lives, especially of working class woman.

Roll of Class in Tess

Unlike many other Victorian novelists, Hardy opens his work to a variety of interpretations. Class is a debatable issue here, as Victorian era due to economic growth and dislocation was the victim of class. Class was the issue, Hardy himself suffered.

Point of discussion here in this paper is also class (class division, class struggle, class consciousness, class exploitation and sufferings of a class) and its impact on different lives. All these perspectives and their impact can easily be analyzed under Marxist literary theory because theory is also based on similar Marxist assumptions of class (warfare, division, struggle, sufferings and consciousness).

Tess's fall in this novel is due to class and economy. Economy plays an important role in making or breaking a class and its respect. Economy is also important in Marx's analysis of class as it is important in this novel.

Variety of Class in This Novel

Class division is the very first step, which creates a sense of degradation and deprivation for working classes due to elite people's exploitation. In the novel this division is very similar to the description about division in Marxism.

All the characters of the novel belong to different classes. In the light of Marxist analysis, Tess herself is seen as a representative of the working class, exploited by the capitalist Alec and a middle class Clare.

Alec's father, Mr. Stokes, is a commercial capitalist, whose wealth is being spent in luxury, without benefiting the economy.

Clare is the representative of the middle class. There is also petit bourgeois level just as in Marxism, at Flint comb Ash dairy where Groby, a farmer wants to exploit Tess, We can also see Marxist ideal community at Talbothays dairy, where there is equality of work and labor. Production norms are met voluntarily and there is peace and harmony. Here Tess is undermined by the false consciousness of her family in this novel especially, that of her father. All these interpretations in the light of Marxist theory justify the role of class and are preliminary step to go ahead to scrutinize this novel for same purpose. First, I describe class divisions, which are similar to Marxist theory and prove that this division creates exploitation of the character Tess in this novel. She is the example of ideological atrocities of patriarchal society of nineteenth century England.

When there is May-Day dance festival, different girls did dance there and many male bodies also joined them. Tess was one of those dancers who danced there. Writer shows the class of Mr. Clare by saying member of superior class as it is in the text lines.

It is said, among the onlookers there were three
young men of a superior class carrying small
knapsacks strapped.

These three onlookers were Angel Clare and his two brothers whom the writer describes member of superior class due to their dandy and dignified dresses (p 22). At Talbothays dairy he works with the farm workers but he sits apart at meal time and is always addressed respectfully by the dairy owner and all other workers.

There is another character,

Alec, who belongs to aristocrat class, obviously a sexual predator and a dandy, his stylish clothes, the driving of a fast carriage and a smoking of a cigar are typical aristocratic traits (p 61).

He is a villain who seeks the ruin of an innocent girl for his own pleasure. Alec the son of a capitalist has never had to work- his idleness becomes a bad influence on the village. Tess as representative of the working class is being exploited as a designed supervisor, which becomes a sign of sexual exploitation.

The efforts to seduce Tess by the D'Urberville son also operate on assumption about the right of privileged class. This is an assault whose foundation is at least as much a perception of the right of the ruling class over the poor as the superior force of a cad like D'Urberville.

Tess's Class and How Does She Pay Heed to Hide Her Class

Tess is a character in the novel belonging to working class. Her father has only one horse for earning and for transportation, and they are living in a flat which is not their own. She is the victim of Class-inequity in the whole novel. In chapter nine Hardy clearly tells us that she is from working class and in this way three divisions of classes are presented in the novel. Her class is evident from these lines,

Ah, you are young woman come to look after my birds" said Mrs. D'Urberville, I hope you will be kind to them. My bailiff tells me you are quite proper person (p 68).

It is clear from Marxism that working class struggle hard to become the member of the elite class, this novel also has many incidents which show the struggle and hiding, done by working class.

Tess has some impact of education because she has passed the sixth standard in the National school under a London trained mistress. She comes from lower class but she can affect a higher personality due to her education. She is the only responsible member of her family who has some live conscience about her class and does continues struggle to hide her class and to show herself member of a high class. It is also a hiding element, that she speaks two dialects. One is a local language she speaks to her mother at home and the ordinary English abroad and to the persons of quality, as it is mention in the novel

She spoke two languages: the dialect at home, more or less ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality (p 28).

Tess' Mother's Role to Make Her a Tragic Figure

Tess inspite of the member of the low class is a character who has high morale and self-esteem. We can see it in chapter 5 when her mother tells her about the rich lady D'Urberville living on the outskirts of the chase. She says to Tess, you must go to her and ask for some help, to which Tess replies us,

I shouldn't care to do that, if there is such a lady it would be enough for us if she is friendly not to expect her to give help (p 43).

Tess has to do this job due to a shift in the society from agrarian to mechanical. Industries have been developed to replace agriculture and working class has its only means of earning from this resource. She goes to do work on her mother's insistence, saying that,

and don't go thinking about her making a match for me- it is silly (p 43).

Here Tess may be excused for being innocent, because she does not know that “ danger lies in menfolk” and also that she does not agree to go and work in that house. It is only her mother who inspite of aware of the fact, consciously sends Tess to earn money at that house. This consciousness, she gets from economic compulsion. Hence, Economy, being a propelling force is a source of exploitation and degradation for Tess.

Working Class’s Class Consciousness

Class consciousness is another dominant aspect of this novel as this is present in Marxism also. This consciousness is present in the very first chapter of the novel where John Durbeyfield becomes happy over a useless piece of information. Parson Tringham, a historian, tells him, you are the lineal representative of an ancient and knightly family called D’Urberville. Even though he knows that both are different families, but he develops the historian’s point of view and wants to make relation with D’Urberville family. He is much inspired when Tringham says,

” there is hardly such another family in England”.

That’s why he wants to send Tess in the house of that family. His inner motive to send Tess was to emerge in society by marrying Tess in that family.

This class consciousness develops step further in the novel when one day John Durbeyfield was on his way home, he met a boy whom he told that he is sir john D’Urberville. He said to lad to take up his basket and go to Marlott. As the lad stood in a dubious nature after reaching his home in Marlott,

Durbeyfield put his hand in his pocket and gave
the boy a shilling only to maintain his position(p 17).

Novel also shows that it is only working class that their children can’t study well due to limited facilities and lack of resources. Same is the case with Tess, she left school after the death of his father’s horse and did work for younger ones of her family. She lent a hand at harvesting and haymaking on different farms or by working as milkmaid and butter maid because she had learnt and excelled these work when her father had cows (p 45). She wants to make her name

and to rise in society only through struggle and work hard.

Elite Class's Exploitation of Working Class

It is also evident from this novel that elite class exploit the lower class in every possible way, either it is economic, social or sexual. Such exploitation is present in this novel when Alec, a bad and ill-omens nature man from aristocrat class says to Tess,

upon my honor!" cried he, "there was never before
such a beautiful thing in nature or art as you look,
cousin Tess (72).

Where cousin had a faint ring of mockery. Alec's cunningness enabled him to remove much of her original shyness without implanting any feelings. His aid and company to Tess after she has beaten by Car Darch has the aspect of exploitation which she can't understand fully and is seduced by Alec in the Chase, the oldest forest in England when she was in her deep sleep.

Tess left her home for the second time in chapter 16 to regain the name of her family and to fulfill the needs of younger ones of her family. She left Marlott regretfully and went towards Talbothays dairy in order to perform hard manual labor. She appears more confident and calm on her second journey than her more leisurely first one, because she has rejected such unrealistic dreams as she dreamed about D'Urberville. She worked as a dairymaid there,

all my prettiness comes from her, and she was
a dairymaid (p118).

During reading this novel it has been noted that it is only Tess who did struggle hard to move upward and for the sake of her family. Paraphrase of chapter 16 is there to support this point of view,

it is really Tess who wished to walk for high position,
while her father did nothing of this kind. Tess thought
about her father, as a contented person who felt pleasure
over immediate and small achievements, and who never
wanted to do laborious effort to improve his petty

social condition, which was affected only by handicapped member of the family who once was powerful in the history, but now badly handicapped D'Urberville (p120).

Clare's Hypocritic Love and Tess's Inferiority Complex

Chapter 18 and 19 shows that Clare loves Tess, but he as well as his family did not know about her class. He plays on flute as well as loves to listen to music. He had thought about Tess from the time he had danced with Tess. Now they are working together at Talbothay's dairy, he listened a musical voice and said,

What a fluty voice one of those milkmaids has!

I suppose it is a new one.

He continued to observe Tess and said to himself,

what a fresh and virginal daughter of nature that milkmaid is!" (p 137).

These qualities were sufficient to impress him to select Tess in preference to the other pretty milkmaids working there.

Tess is the victim of class complex and is always in frustration that she could not understand why a man of clerical family and good education has chosen her. Her proximity to the D'Urberville at the Talbothays dairy reminds her, they are a fallen family.

Text of the same chapter again shows Tess as a victim of class and that's why a prey of inferiority complex, as she herself says,

my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live always (141).

It was not her own desire to present herself a member of the elite class and due to her unwilling tragedy she spoke these words.

She suffers, as every reader understands due to her inferior class. That's why she preferred death over life. In the same chapter she is dejected again due to her class and cannot

even think about marriage with Clare. She says,

Every day, every hour, brought to her one
more little stroke, and of Angel one more.

She considers it only dream and compares him with herself, as the textual line shows,

she compares the distance between her own modest
mental standpoint and the immeasurable , Andean
Altitude of his (142).

In case of hiding her class, she asks the dairyman,

if Mr. Clare had any great respect for old country
families when they had lost all their money and
land (144).

In chapter 22, class is presented by her dress. Angel Clare asks Tess about her well being when they were discussing a score of personal matters, “the hem of her petticoat just touching his (angel Clare) gaiter” (p144).

This chapter again shows Tess’s inferiority complex. When Clare asks for marrying Tess, she replies,

marry one of them if you really want to marry
a dairymaid and not a lady; and do not think
of marrying me.

She does not consider herself a lady but a working maid.

On one hand it is the choice of every working class to move ahead and to be a part of high class and to bridge this cruel gap which makes them marginalized. This struggle can be seen at Talbothay’s dairy where every working woman wants to marry Clare as the textual sentence shows,

every woman has a practical and sordid expectation

of winning him(Angel) as a husband (p 164).

While on the other hand every elite class is so much conscious about their class that they are never ready to accept the member of working class as their own family member. When Clare discusses in his home about the marriage with Tess, his whole family becomes rash and furious as, they say,

“he had lost culture and that he had become coarse”.

Clare is insulted in his family because he wants to marry a working class lady. Only this class consciousness wants to move away Clare from Tess which he never agrees to do at any cost, because he sees in her, his own benefit. Class consciousness is a dominant aspect of the novel similarly as this consciousness is present in Marx’s class division Clare’s mother wants to marry Clare with Mercy Chant and says about her,

“she is of a very good family”.

But she says about Tess,

“she is a cottager’s daughter”.

In fact there is a battle of words between mother and son. She wants to convince Clare about her own point of view and he insists upon his own views about class. Clare describes her qualities which an agriculturist’s wife must possess. He says either Tess is from working class but she is a young woman equally pure and virtuous as miss chant. He further explains,

If Chant does ecclesiastical accomplishments, Tess understands the duties of farm life as well as farmer himself.

Clare describes her some more qualities to her mother to compensate her class,

she does attend church almost every Sunday morning,
and is a good Christian girl, I am sure you will tolerate
any social shortcomings for the sake of that quality(p 182).

Tess always thinks about her low class and when Clare insists her to marry him, she says,

I can't be your wife, I can't be!

She further says,

your father is a parson and your mother would
never agree to marry me. She will want you to
marry a lady.

Tess does not want to marry because she is worried about its results. She recalls again and again the illusion of Alec D'Urberville and thinks; this person from good class can also play the same trick with her. It shows the bad impact of class on poor Tess.

Tess says about old families in chapter 30, where Clare wants to ask Tess that I was told by the dairyman, you did hate old families and she replied, it is true in one sense,

“I do hate the aristocratic principle of blood before everything” (207).

These class conscious attitude and tricks of old families made Tess to hate these families. Angel Clare who is from middle class and loves Tess very much, who says that he cannot live without her is also worried due to her class. This is seen in the same chapter when Clare says,

society is hopelessly snobbish, and may make
an appreciable difference to its acceptance of
you as my wife (208).

He is worried about society, which creates difference between different classes, high and low. Elite people have prejudices against working people and try to build gap between them. They are never ready to dissolve these bonds. That's why people from working class suffer.

In chapter 31, paradoxically and cunningly Angel Clare has beautiful point of view about class. He gave no importance to class whatever it was, for him the only importance was of Tess, whom he loved whole heartedly. These set of conventions are the conventions of different classes, which the society has made. But these conventions are useless for Clare and only importance is of the Tess who has good morale and civilized attitude.

Why Tess has become so much important? Why Angel can't live without Tess? Because

his work can become difficult without her. He wants to get Tess at any cost and inspite of many hurdles, only for future advantage. He says,

distinction does not consist in facile use of despising
set of conventions, but being numbered among those
who are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely,
and of good report- as you are, my Tess (215).

Why only Tess to marry? Because elite class only thinks its own benefit in every task of life. Now Angel wants to get Tess not only, because Tess is beautiful, but also because she knows all the dairy work very well and Angel wants to become a dairy man in future. He has come here only to learn dairy methods and finds Tess a perfect girl in this work, which can be a good source of economy for him. She is not only a master at milking but also knows how to make butter from milk. She can also does work at fields. He wants to marry Tess even against the will of his family, only because he sees economic advantage in her. Thus economy is a propelling force in Angel's choice. In chapter 33 it is noted that Clare had lived a life of recluse in respect of the world of his own class just as Marxist illustrates about the elite class, they never want to come down as working class. All the dairyman and dairymaids working at Talbothays dairy are from working class. He does not want to mingle himself with these working people. It is also noted that at dinner time he is on a separate table and he also lives in a separate house away from workers. This shows his clear class consciousness.

These incidents also show that elite classes build barriers for the working classes and Clare is also not free from class prejudices.

When Tess tells about her past, Angel becomes furious and is not ready to listen more, what he says,

the woman I have been loving is not you, but
another in your shape" (p 252) .

In fact Clare has known not only her past but purity has come into Angel's hands as an exploitative tool. On the plea of this shallow excuse he rejects Tess. His fidelity of fooled

honesty is often great after enlightenment and it was mighty in Clare now". Now he does not want to live with her and even goes out of the house leaving Tess alone.

Tess argues and pleads her case. She tells that she is not a deceitful woman, and Clare replies,

“don’t argue. Different societies, different manners” (253).

He considers himself superior to all others. He also says to Tess, whom he loved more than anything else,

you are a peasant woman who has never been
initiated into the proportions of social things.

Elite class always consider peasants out of society as we also note in Marxism, it is also evident that elite class never agree to forgive the sin of poor class. Tess replies to Clare in this way,

“I am only peasant by position, not by nature”.

But position is preferred in that society, that’s why Clare says,

I cannot help associating your decline as a family
with this other fact (p 254).

This line shows that sin is not actual problem but the actual problem is class. Chapter 39 also shows this class prejudice, where Clare does not allow Tess to go his own parents home when he sets for Brazil, instead he sends her to her own mother’s home. He alone comes to his parent’s home to pack his luggage for his first journey. His mother asks him about Tess and he replies,

his original plan had been, as he had said, to refrain
from bringing her there for some little while- not to
wound their prejudices- feelings- in any way (285).

Her sin and her belonging to working class family has adhered her to come in Clare’s parent home because he does not want to wound the feelings of his parents about high class.

In chapter 42 Tess is again part of working class. Here Clare has gone to Brazil leaving her alone. Tess again started working at fields but now all her passion about high class has gone. She is weeping bitterly for very pity of herself,

she walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape,
a field woman (304).

She goes to Flintcomb Ash to do work hard. She is still the working class member as she was before marriage. This shows how working class suffers for dignity and respect. She, inspite of working class has respect for all other classes high or low. She also does care a lot for Clare's name. When all the girls at dairy call her Mrs. Clare, she stops them to say this, "Don't call me Mrs. Clare but Tess, as before".

She does this only to establish his respect. She does not want to listen that Clare's wife is doing work at dairy and in this way,

she does not want to bring his name down to the dirt.

This is so, because working class's ideology and consciousness has been constructed in this way by their own family and moreover by the society. They feel hesitation and uncomfortable among elite members. This is also because; she is continuously a prey of inferiority complex. She considers herself as much degraded and low quality as equal to dirt.

Dynamics in Alec's Hypocritical Tricks

Elite class's teasing and torturing to the working class again and again, is also common here. Alec again comes toward Tess when she is working at Mr. Crick's dairy. He makes a long discussion with her, that she does not want to listen. Dairyman watches this and shows scornful remarks against poor working woman.

You have made an agreement to work for me till Lady Day and I'll see; you carry it out and at once growled,

od rot the woman- now it happened once

and it would happen again. But I shall put
up with it no longer (344).

Tess is a servant working here because she has no other means of earning for her family. Elite class Alec is becoming a hurdle again and again of her way. His coming at dairy and talk to Tess for a long time is severely disliked by dairyman, who threatens Tess to offer work no more. In this way working class suffers, either they are at fault or not.

In chapter 46 Alec calls Tess a petticoat. He is man of cunning nature and has no feelings for the poor. He wants to use them only to gain pleasure and uses many tricks and methods to seduce her. He shows himself a caretaker, a well-wisher, and a true guardian of Tess, but at the same time he calls her a working girl with petticoat, as it is noted in the text,

there was one petticoat in the world for whom
I had no contempt (348).

He never considered Tess a worthy woman but always tempted her to gain pleasure. Now his hypocrite and mean nature is working to persuade Tess again.

In the next chapter she has been shown doing work hard only due to her poor economic conditions. Marian who is a slow speed and inspite of Groby's (a farmer) objection that she is too slow handed for a feeder. She is doing work at Flintcomb Ash. Mr. Groby admired Tess by saying,

Tess is one of those who best combined
strength with quickness in untying and both
with staying power, and this may have been true (p353).

In the whole novel Tess is a hard working lady who always tries her best for her family, but instead of all her good qualities she is unable to get any good job. In this way working class always struggle to gain not only money but respect and designation also.

Alec once again exploits Tess and wants to deceive her when he sees Tess working at

dairy farm. He thinks her days have not turned and she is in the same condition of working as she was before. Evil spirited Alec has following words of temptation,

I am more taken with you than ever, and
I pity you. For all your closeness, I see you
are in a bad way- neglected by one who ought
to cherish you.

His remarks about Angel's exploitation and carelessness of Tess are again cunning and double faced. Tess is worried about this discussion because she is threatened already by the dairyman; she will be dismissed if the situation of talking resists more. Poor Tess replies,

It is cruelty to me!" how can you treat me to
this talk, you care ever so little for me (357).

She does not want to go with him inspite of his insistence and says,
whip me, crush me, you need not mind those
people under the rick! I shall not cry out.

Once victim, always victim- that is the law. It is the law of elite class that becomes permanent to victimize the poor again and again, specially, who has become once prey. Working class suffers in every condition, we see it when she remains busy in reducing the stack, Marian and Izz never changed their duties now. Writer tells us that whenever Tess lifted her head she beheld the great up grown stack. She is so much exhausted after this heavy duty that she can't speak louder.

Her false class consciousness is described in chapter 50 when her mother is seriously ill and she says,

Would that somebody go round and tell them what
there is living among them and they thinking nothing of him.

She remembers Parson Tringham who once called them descendant of D'Urberville, if he had lived he would have done it, I am sure. She wants to get help from the people on the name of elite class. At this moment Alec comes to deceive Tess again, who himself says,

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I am the old one come to tempt you in the disguise
of inferior animal.

He comes there and does work with Tess and speaks a beautiful sentence to tempt her;
I come to protest against your working like this.

Once again there is struggle to hide class, when Tess's father died they are not allowed to stay in that cottage more, and lived as weekly tenants. They were asked, if you were a genuine D'Urberville, Tess replies, yes genuine D'Urberville, we are going only to get better chances. In this way working class does struggle to hide class. Working class describes its suffering which they have experienced in the form of that words which they have learnt at Sunday school.

Here we suffer grief and pain;
Here we meet to part again;
In heaven we part no more.

They had experienced grief and sufferings in their whole life, when their father was there and also after his death. Tess remained outside the cottage to earn livelihood for her family members. In chapter 54 Clare comes back to reconcile Tess. On his way he watches these words inscribed on the grave of Tess's father,

In memory of John Durbeyfield, rightly D'Urberville,
of the once power family of that name, and direct
descendent through an illustrious line from sir
Pagan D'Urberville, one of the knights of the conqueror
Died March 10th, 18.

Here she had tried to relate her family with knights. But who know the reality, are never agree to accept this. Marx also advises working class to struggle and emerge in society, but this family is an idle one, as instead of Tess, no one else is ready to do work.

At the time of her execution at the end of the novel she requests to Angel to marry her sister Liza-Lu, on the same plea of purity, for which she was rejected. It is also, her attempt at

class shifting. Her journey concludes her struggle for class, till the very moment of death

In conclusion, Study of this novel under Marxist literary theory clearly shows the role and impact of class in the life of persons related to different classes, and that elite class ever exploits working class for its personal benefits. Working class always remain under pressure of bourgeoisie class which becomes hurdle in their way of progress. It clearly shows impact of class, especially on Tess and her family by depicting Tess's family as a sufferer of class positioning and their effort at class shifting process.

Problems and Suggestions

We can note that the major problem behind all this discussion about class is economy. But why people having economy develop this type of problem. The main cause is illiteracy or lack of education. Most of the People who are less educated do not have the sense to speak to others. They never bother that the other persons' feelings can suppress or die with their words. Literacy rate must be increase to avoid this problem.

Second problem is the lack of awareness and social interaction. We don't have any interaction with the people of low rank and this thing creates difference.

Third problem is the lack of good manners and etiquettes. Most of the elite persons do not have the sense to talk to the lower workers. We can see this thing in offices and especially in the villages where a revenue collector considers himself all in all of the village and talks to others in a harsh and indifferent manner. We must develop good manners to make this class and rank differences minimum, because we are as human beings and as having one Master, equal.

Fourthly, people don't obey the message of nature, where there is no exploitation of the poor by the rich and which have regarded all the people equal. Nature gives us the lesson of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. It has taught us to help the poor and needy ones, and here the difference is only on the basis of being pious. If we truly follow the rules and teaching of Nature, we can eradicate this evil upto maximum level and can establish a happy society where everyone will do work according to his capacity and will be respected as an important member of society.

We can say positively that elite and working classes are the products of Nature, but

Nature never allows any high class to exploit the low class. Elite people are never in a right to impose their own ideology on the working people and to suppress their rights and God gifted abilities.

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