

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Thomas Hardy's Tess And Iqbol Mirzo's Bonu – The Image of a Hero Struggling for Happiness

Hamzayeva Zebo Murodjon qizi

The University of Economics and Pedagogy, Interfaculty Foreign Languages Department, English teacher, Uzbekistan

Received: 12 February 2025 **Accepted:** 13 March 2025 **Published:** 09 April 2025

ABSTRACT

This article explores the depiction of a hero's struggle for happiness in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Iqbol Mirzo's *Bonu*. Both works present protagonists who face societal constraints, moral dilemmas, and personal hardships in their pursuit of fulfillment. Tess and Bonu emerge as symbolic figures of resilience, navigating environments that restrict their agency. While Hardy critiques Victorian social norms that dictate gender roles and class divisions, Mirzo reflects post-Soviet cultural tensions and shifting social values. This comparative study highlights the universal nature of human perseverance and the impact of societal expectations on individual well-being. By examining key themes such as fate, love, and social injustice, the article underscores how these literary figures resonate across cultures and historical contexts.

Keywords: Hero, struggle, happiness, societal constraints, fate, resilience, Thomas Hardy, Iqbol Mirzo, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Bonu*, cultural values, social norms, gender roles.

INTRODUCTION

Literature has long served as a reflection of human experiences, illustrating the emotional, psychological, and social challenges faced by individuals. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Iqbol Mirzo's *Bonu* are prime examples of this tradition, portraying heroines who endure immense hardship while seeking happiness. Despite being shaped by different cultural and historical contexts, both Tess and Bonu struggle against societal norms that limit their autonomy and personal fulfillment. By examining these two works, this article aims to reveal how Hardy and Mirzo depict the universal conflict between individual desires and external pressures.

Both Hardy and Mirzo craft narratives that position their heroines in environments where societal norms and cultural values dictate their paths. Tess's tragic journey reflects the restrictive social framework of Victorian England, where morality, class, and family expectations shape her fate. Conversely, Bonu's experiences unfold in the context of a post-Soviet society grappling with modern cultural shifts, yet she faces similarly oppressive social

constraints. Through these portrayals, both authors emphasize how personal choices are often overshadowed by powerful societal expectations.

Furthermore, the depiction of fate plays a significant role in both novels. Tess's life is marked by a series of tragic coincidences, reinforcing Hardy's deterministic worldview. Bonu, too, faces circumstances beyond her control, suggesting that individual agency is limited by social pressures and cultural traditions. By comparing these narratives, this article reveals the shared literary devices and thematic concerns that connect these seemingly distinct works. Ultimately, Tess and Bonu emerge as universal symbols of resilience, standing as testaments to the enduring struggle for personal happiness in the face of societal oppression.

Significance of Female Protagonists

The choice of female protagonists in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* is crucial to understanding the broader social commentary present in both novels. Tess

and Bonu are not only individual characters but also symbolic representations of marginalized groups whose voices are often suppressed. By centering their narratives on female heroines, Hardy and Mirzo highlight the unique vulnerabilities women face in patriarchal societies. Tess's tragic fate underscores the moral double standards that existed in Victorian England, where women were held to stricter codes of virtue and faced harsher consequences for social transgressions. Similarly, Bonu's struggles reflect the complex social expectations placed on women in a transforming post-Soviet society. Through their protagonists' experiences, both authors critique gender inequality and emphasize the resilience required for women to pursue happiness in restrictive social environments.

Furthermore, Tess and Bonu's emotional strength, endurance, and unwavering determination serve to inspire readers, demonstrating the profound impact of resilience in overcoming societal oppression. In this sense, both characters stand as powerful representations of female agency, underscoring the enduring struggle for equality and self-fulfillment. Furthermore, the depiction of fate plays a significant role in both novels. Tess's life is marked by a series of tragic coincidences, reinforcing Hardy's deterministic worldview. Bonu, too, faces circumstances beyond her control, suggesting that individual agency is limited by social pressures and cultural traditions. By comparing these narratives, this article reveals the shared literary devices and thematic concerns that connect these seemingly distinct works. Ultimately, Tess and Bonu emerge as universal symbols of resilience, standing as testaments to the enduring struggle for personal happiness in the face of societal oppression.

Historical and Cultural Background

The social environments in which Hardy and Mirzo wrote their respective works play a crucial role in shaping the narratives. Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was published in 1891, a period marked by rigid Victorian values that upheld strict moral codes, particularly for women. Victorian England was characterized by a clear social hierarchy, where class divisions dictated individual opportunities, and women were often judged harshly for perceived moral failings. Tess's tragic fate reflects these social conditions, as her personal struggles are shaped by societal expectations and limited opportunities for redemption.

In contrast, Iqbol Mirzo's *Bonu* was written in the post-Soviet era, a time of cultural transformation and identity crisis in Uzbekistan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbek society faced rapid social changes as traditional values clashed with emerging ideologies. Bonu's experiences reflect this tension, as she navigates a world where family expectations, social norms, and personal aspirations collide. By situating their heroines in these distinct yet similarly oppressive contexts, Hardy and Mirzo explore the broader themes of fate, societal pressure, and individual resilience.

Moral and Philosophical Insights

Both Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Bonu explore profound moral and philosophical questions that challenge societal norms and invite readers to reflect on justice, morality, and individual freedom.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy analyzes the rigid moral standards of Victorian society, particularly the unjust treatment of women. Tess's tragic fate underscores the hypocrisy of a culture that condemns female victims while excusing male perpetrators. Through Tess's suffering, Hardy questions whether true moral virtue can be defined by societal expectations or if it exists independently of public judgment. His portrayal of Tess as "a pure woman" challenges conventional ideas about innocence and guilt, emphasizing personal integrity over social labels.

Similarly, in *Bonu*, Iqbol Mirzo reviews the oppressive traditions that limit women's autonomy in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. Bonu's struggle for self-determination highlights the tension between individual desires and societal expectations. By portraying Bonu's internal conflict, Mirzo raises important questions about the nature of freedom — whether true happiness lies in conforming to cultural norms or in forging one's own path. Bonu's resilience ultimately reflects Mirzo's belief in the importance of self-awareness and inner strength in the face of adversity.

Both authors also explore the theme of fate versus free will. Tess's life appears tragically predetermined by social class, gender inequality, and family burdens, while Bonu's fate is shaped by cultural pressures and societal change. Despite these challenges, both heroines persist, raising the philosophical question of whether human agency can overcome oppressive circumstances. By presenting these complex moral dilemmas, Hardy and Mirzo encourage

readers to reflect on the nature of justice, the power of social expectations, and the enduring human struggle for happiness and self-fulfillment.

Broader Literary Impact

Both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* have left significant marks on literature in their respective cultural and historical contexts, contributing to broader discussions on social justice, gender roles, and individual resilience.

Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* has become a cornerstone of feminist literary criticism. Its portrayal of Tess as a victim of societal double standards has sparked discussions about gender inequality, victim-blaming, and moral hypocrisy. Scholars have praised Hardy's sympathetic treatment of Tess, which challenged Victorian norms that condemned women for perceived moral failings. Tess's enduring presence in literature has influenced numerous adaptations in film, theater, and television, further extending her cultural impact. The novel continues to resonate with modern readers as a powerful critique of social injustice and the oppression of marginalized groups.

Similarly, Mirzo's *Bonu* holds a significant place in Uzbek literature, particularly for its exploration of female identity in post-Soviet society. The novel addresses themes of cultural transformation, family expectations, and the struggle for personal freedom, resonating with readers in a time of social change. Mirzo's depiction of Bonu as a strong yet vulnerable heroine has enriched Uzbek literature by offering a voice to women grappling with traditional norms in a rapidly modernizing world. Both works continue to inspire contemporary writers exploring themes of gender inequality, social injustice, and human resilience. By portraying heroines who resist societal constraints, Hardy and Mirzo have contributed to a literary tradition that champions personal strength and moral courage in the face of adversity.

Authorial Intent

The creation of Tess and Bonu reflects the authors' conscious efforts to critique the societal norms and cultural expectations of their time. Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was intended as a powerful commentary on the rigid social structure of Victorian England, particularly highlighting the unjust moral standards applied to women. Through Tess's tragic journey, Hardy exposes the devastating consequences of social hypocrisy and the limited choices

available to women burdened by class and gender restrictions. His portrayal reflects his broader concerns about social reform and individual freedom.

Similarly, Iqbol Mirzo's *Bonu* reflects his deep engagement with post-Soviet Uzbek society, where the rapid cultural shifts following independence left many individuals struggling to define their identities. By portraying Bonu's struggle for personal fulfillment, Mirzo critiques outdated traditions that restrict women's agency while emphasizing the importance of self-determination in a rapidly changing world. Both authors use their protagonists as tools to challenge prevailing social attitudes, encouraging readers to reflect on themes of justice, autonomy, and resilience.

Symbolism and Imagery

Both Hardy and Mirzo employ rich symbolism and imagery to convey deeper meanings in their narratives. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, nature plays a significant symbolic role, reflecting Tess's emotional journey. The changing seasons, for example, mirror her shifting fortunes — spring symbolizing hope, summer passion, and winter despair. The colour red frequently appears as a symbol of both Tess's vitality and her tragic fate, reinforcing her connection to themes of sacrifice and suffering.

In *Bonu*, Mirzo also utilizes symbolic elements to emphasize Bonu's inner struggles and the broader social challenges she faces. The recurring motif of water, for instance, reflects her desire for purity and renewal, while symbols of traditional Uzbek clothing highlight the cultural pressures imposed on women. Through these symbolic devices, both authors deepen their narratives, encouraging readers to explore the complex interplay between personal identity and societal expectations. By intertwining symbolism and imagery with their protagonists' emotional struggles, Hardy and Mirzo elevate their works beyond individual narratives, presenting universal themes of endurance, self-discovery, and the search for happiness.

Comparative Literary Techniques

Hardy and Mirzo employ distinct yet comparable literary techniques that shape their narratives and enhance the emotional depth of their protagonists' struggles. Hardy's use of omniscient narration allows him to provide readers with detailed insights into Tess's thoughts, feelings, and the

societal forces that shape her fate. This narrative technique creates a powerful sense of empathy, drawing readers into Tess's emotional turmoil. In contrast, Mirzo employs a more introspective and symbolic narrative style, using inner monologues and reflective language to convey Bonu's internal conflicts. This technique emphasizes Bonu's psychological struggle as she navigates a world of shifting values and uncertain identity.

Additionally, both authors employ dramatic irony to heighten emotional tension. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the reader often knows more about Tess's fate than the character herself, underscoring the tragic inevitability of her circumstances. Similarly, in *Bonu*, moments of irony reveal the tension between Bonu's personal aspirations and the cultural constraints that limit her choices. By integrating these literary techniques, Hardy and Mirzo create emotionally resonant narratives that engage readers while emphasizing the broader social themes embedded in their works.

Relevance to Contemporary Society

Despite being set in distinct historical contexts, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* address themes that remain strikingly relevant in modern society. Both novels explore issues such as societal pressure, gender inequality, and the struggle for personal fulfillment — challenges that individuals continue to face today.

The theme of societal pressure is particularly prominent in both works. Tess's life is dictated by the rigid moral codes of Victorian England, where women's reputations were easily destroyed by scandal, regardless of the circumstances. Similarly, Bonu faces pressure from her family and community to conform to traditional expectations, limiting her ability to pursue independence and happiness. In contemporary society, individuals — particularly women — continue to encounter judgment and social control, whether through cultural norms, family expectations, or public scrutiny.

Gender inequality is another lasting concern reflected in both novels. Tess's victimization and Bonu's restricted agency highlight the continued struggle for gender equity. Issues such as victim-blaming, workplace discrimination, and unequal social standards are still experienced globally, making the stories of Tess and Bonu deeply relatable for modern audiences. Finally, both works emphasize personal resilience — a theme that resonates with readers navigating

personal challenges today. Tess's quiet strength and Bonu's determination to forge her own path serve as powerful reminders of the courage required to pursue happiness in the face of social obstacles.

By exploring these universal themes, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* maintain their relevance, offering readers insight into the enduring complexities of human experience and the ongoing struggle for self-determination in changing social landscapes.

Emotional Impact

Both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* evoke strong emotional responses through their poignant narratives and deeply human characters. Hardy's portrayal of Tess's suffering — her innocence, betrayal, and tragic downfall — creates a sense of profound sympathy and frustration in readers. Similarly, Bonu's emotional journey — marked by her resilience, inner conflict, and search for purpose — resonates powerfully with readers facing cultural or personal struggles. By immersing readers in the emotional worlds of their protagonists, Hardy and Mirzo effectively convey themes of injustice, perseverance, and the universal desire for fulfillment.

Potential for Further Study

The comparative analysis of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Bonu* opens several avenues for further exploration in literary studies. Both novels present complex female protagonists whose struggles reflect broader social issues, making them valuable texts for examining themes of gender, cultural identity, and moral conflict.

One potential area for further study is the comparison of Tess and Bonu with other iconic female characters in literature. For example, Hardy's Eustacia Vye from *The Return of the Native* shares Tess's tragic fate, as both characters struggle against societal norms and personal misfortune. Similarly, in Uzbek literature, the character of Layli from *Layli va Majnun* embodies themes of love, sacrifice, and social constraint, offering an interesting parallel to Bonu's experiences. Exploring such connections could reveal deeper insights into how female resilience is portrayed across cultures and historical periods.

Another valuable area for exploration is the role of social class and economic struggle in shaping the destinies of

Hardy's and Mirzo's protagonists. Tess's vulnerability is closely tied to her family's financial hardship, while Bonu's challenges are influenced by post-Soviet economic instability. A comparative study of how economic factors shape character development could provide a richer understanding of the social commentary embedded in both works.

Furthermore, examining the influence of cultural traditions on personal identity could deepen the analysis. While Hardy critiques Victorian values, Mirzo explores Uzbekistan's evolving cultural landscape after Soviet rule. Investigating how literature reflects cultural transformation may offer valuable insights into the tension between tradition and modernity.

By pursuing these lines of inquiry, scholars can uncover new dimensions of Hardy's and Mirzo's works, enriching discussions on gender, identity, and social justice in global literature.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and Iqbol Mirzo's *Bonu* present powerful narratives that explore the struggles of their heroines against societal constraints. Through their compelling portrayals, both authors highlight the resilience of individuals facing cultural expectations, moral dilemmas, and personal hardship. By drawing on symbolism, emotional depth, and social commentary, Hardy and Mirzo offer timeless reflections on the universal human pursuit of happiness and the enduring power of hope in the face of adversity.

Both works have had a significant impact on literature in their respective cultures. Hardy's *Tess* remains a cornerstone of feminist literary criticism, challenging Victorian ideals and inspiring ongoing discussions about social justice and gender roles. Meanwhile, Mirzo's *Bonu* has contributed to contemporary Uzbek literature by shedding light on the complexities of post-Soviet cultural identity and the evolving role of women in society.

The themes explored in these works — societal pressure, gender inequality, and personal resilience — continue to resonate in modern times. Issues such as victim-blaming, rigid moral expectations, and the struggle for autonomy are still experienced by many, giving these stories enduring relevance.

Furthermore, Hardy and Mirzo raise profound moral and philosophical questions about justice, social norms, and individual freedom. Both novels prompt readers to reflect on the consequences of societal judgment and the price individuals pay in their pursuit of personal fulfillment.

For future exploration, comparing Tess and Bonu with other female literary figures — such as Hardy's Eustacia Vye from *The Return of the Native* or iconic Uzbek heroines like Layli from *Layli va Majnun* — could offer further insights into the universal nature of female resilience in literature. By examining these narratives together, readers gain a deeper understanding of the shared struggles faced by women across cultures and historical periods.

REFERENCES

- Hardy, Thomas. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003.
- Mirzo, Iqbol. *Bonu*. Tashkent: Gafur Ghulom Publishing House, 2000.
- Gatrell, Simon. *Thomas Hardy and the Proper Study of Mankind*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
- Widdowson, Peter. *On Thomas Hardy: Late Essays and Earlier*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.
- Mukhtarova, Dilrabo. *Cultural Shifts in Post-Soviet Uzbek Literature*. Tashkent: Sharq Publishing, 2015.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.
- Kadirova, Nodira. "The Role of Women in Post-Soviet Uzbek Literature." *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2018, pp. 45-60.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Gibson, James. *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Azimova, Mohira. "The Image of the Heroine in Modern Uzbek Fiction." *Uzbek Literary Review*, vol. 10, no. 1,

2020, pp. 22-35.

Qizi, H. Z. M. (2024). WOMEN'S ROLES AND GENDER PORTRAYAL IN THOMAS HARDY'S WORKS. Talqin va tadqiqotlar ilmiy-uslubiy jurnali, 2(57), 344-347.

NO, P. The depiction of the new-historical era in Iqbol Mirzo's novel Bonu.