



D.H.LAWRENCE'S SKILL IN EXPLORING THE HUMAN PSYCHE TO ITS DEPTH AS REFLECTED IN HIS SONS AND LOVERS: A BRIEF NOTE

Dr. S.Chelliah

Professor, Head & Chairperson, School of English & Foreign Languages, Department of English & Comparative Literature, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai.

Abstract

This paper clearly pasteurizes the skill of exploring the depth of human psyche through the most prominent figure, D.H.Lawrence. All his novels are autobiographical in nature because he delineates self and society that remain with him and with the people around him, so no one cannot escape from the dynamics of self and society, which are presented through his novels. Undoubtedly, one of his masterpiece "Sons and Lovers" is all about the dynamics of self and society of the contemporary world which can be seen through the light of Oedipus complex. The abnormal relations lead to abnormal conditions to the family as well as to the society, these abnormal holds and indulgences shape and mould our actions, personality and life.

Key Words: *Unconscious, corroding, dynamics, Oedipus complex, superficial attraction.*

D.H. Lawrence as a novelist is one of the most significant figures of our century. He is grouped among those who have explored the human psycho to its depth. The philosophy of his is conditioned by intuitive thinking. The ideas come to him as juices come to the fruit. His philosophy does not stem from a system, but the system emerges from a philosophy. Art is the second attempt, but it assimilates well in the founts of his philosophy. The mind of Lawrence goes too deep into the problems and the psychoanalysis helps him to develop his ideas. It is a philosophy of revolt against the societal taboos. His thoughts are in-built and they emerge as easily to him as they do in the Indian mystics like Nanak and Kabir. He holds that a novel should be 'thought adventure'. It tends to give it completeness. It must not only be a record of 'emotion-adventures', floundering in feelings. The 'thought adventure' shall be a new dimension having depth about it. It will make novel reflective and elevate to a philosophical level.

Lawrence is a staunch advocate of interrelatedness particularly between man and woman, man and man, between the human and the universe. This attitude of inter-relatedness imports a kind of wholeness to the novel and there is wholeness in the novels of D.H.Lawrence. As it is known to all, the business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe at the living moment. Lawrence's conception of novel is deeply related with the life-element which has been viewed with a profound sense of wonder on his part.

The individuality of Lawrence as an artist makes him loathe the stream of consciousness school of the novels. He hates the style of Joyce and Miss Richardson for their being 'absorbedly self-conscious. Not only the subconscious but unconscious has also been probed deeply by him. As being a novelist, says D.H.Lawrence, "I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet". Thus, he stands at an advantageous position as compared to the enumerated ones. There is a wholeness about his novels and there is interrelated too which pervades his literary pieces, particularly man-woman relationship has been explored in all its intricate problems. He is the most unconventional novelist of our times who, like Blake and Whitman, 'hates mind' but 'full of ideas'. Lawrence is said to have presented something special to his generation. As he was deeply affected by the happenings around him, his works are a mixture of self and society. He too affected the actions of the people all around him. His novels are based on his experiences accumulated through various phases of live. Though he has been dead for more than fifty years, he shows no signs of lying down. He is more alive today than at any other time in the twentieth century. In the words of Gamini Salgado, "His expository writings until recently apologized for and embarrassedly passed over even by admirers of Lawrence the artist, are being read with a new respect" (P 63). An ever increasing 'fan club' the world over testifies to the evergreen memory of Lawrence. Contemporary Criticism has stemmed the tide against Lawrence by according him his rightful place as a visionary and prophet. "Of all moralists, he is the most demoralizing" (Carswell 35).

The originality and dynamics of self and society is perhaps best assessed by Virginia Woolf who knew him solely by reputation as a prophet, the exponent of some mystical theory of sex, the devotee of cryptic terms, inventor of a new terminology making free use of words. According to Virginia Woolf, the sheer spontaneity of expression was the direct offshoot of Lawrence's lack of tradition. He invented his own tradition out of his own self-dynamics which he weaved with the dynamics of outside society in his novels. He travelled a lot and had many friends all over the globe. He learnt much from his family life about the bitter realities of life. The outer world challenged him to cross all hurdles of life and sustain himself.



Eventhough most of his novels deal with human relationship, the dynamics of self and society makes his novels alive and interesting. Dynamics of self and society is very much evident in his characters, incidents, objects and story-shapes which he give to his manuscripts. He always tried for different types of experiences. He wrote some novels about his personal relationship – Sons and Lovers about his relationship with his mother and also his relationship with his girl friends. These relationships are quite different from each other as they are based on different dynamics of self and society. The Rainbow holds forth the promise of hope; Women in Love is characterized by the apocalyptic vision.

Lawrence's fictional style is viewed by modern critics as a major breakthrough in narrative art. As Aurom Fleishman puts it, "That Lawrence is a master of English prose, whose style reaches a new plateau in the 1920's, on which it moves in a number of exploratory directions after a breakthrough in narrative art" (P 162). Thus, English fiction reaches a high point with the introduction of the Lawrentian idiom-direct sensuous and explicit. Lawrence is now being accorded his rightful place as a master craftsman albeit after his own fashion. W.H.Auden felt that Lawrence could never fail to delight the reader with the enormous pleasure he took in writing. The essential greatness of Lawrence was perhaps apprehended when the early admirer V.Sackville West spoke of him as sharing the intensity of Tolstoy, the indignation of Carlyle and the exuberance of Walt Whitman. Harold Nicolson pointed out, "other and less fastidious hands have fingered the soul of D.H.Lawrence splitting it into psychological fibers, disintegrating a man whose whole purpose was integration" (P 265).

Lawrence's novels are autobiographical in nature as he depicts the dynamics of self and society within him and with the people around him. E.M.Forster was right in calling him "the greatest imaginative novelist of our time" (219) and Aldous Huxley went further in insisting upon the Lawrentian genius as; "To read Lawrence's best work is to undergo a renewal of sensuous and emotional life as to learn a new awareness" (232). One cannot escape the influence of the dynamics of self and society presented through his novels. No doubt, his novels bring renewal to a dead life, emotions to a stone heart and love to hateful man. Lawrence was fully aware of the fact that the world was undergoing a change. He noticed the passivity in the male, the masculine protest in the women, mechanization. But still it seemed that there was craving for unity. This new one may be called at its preparatory stage i.e., the stage of awakening that we find in Sons and Lovers, Lady Chatterleys Lovers, The Lady Bird and The Border Line. The Rainbow stresses the positive aspect, Women in Love deals with disintegration, decay and dissolution. The Man Who Died, exhibits reciprocity of tenderness. It summarises Lawrence's principle "a revelation of the strength and weakness of his utopian ambitions". It deals with Lawrence's exploration of a whole man alive in the flash stressing the role of self and society in bringing a change in the useless and meaningless life.

Sons and Lovers is undoubtedly one of the masterpieces of English fiction. Lawrence himself gave it a lot of importance. It seems to be about a family at the surface level but Lawrence made it a novel about the dynamics of self and society in contemporary society. Its appeal is still universal though it is based on Lawrence's own experiences in life. As the name indicates, this novel deals with something which is quite untalked and unacceptable – "a relationship between Paul Morel and his mother" (282). It stresses the strain of mother's hold on her son's life and his effort to shun away that hold. Paul Morel is the depiction of D.H.Lawrence himself and his friend's theory of Oedipus complex. Due to the hoists and turns of his life, Lawrence had a better understanding of the dimensions of relations of an individual with others. These relations are shown in various dimensions, which provide us a peep into the unconscious thinking of the people involved and help us to understand these relations in a better light. It is here that we see dynamics of self and society dominating the life of a protagonist and he remains in a dilemma whether to accept his mother or go by his own choice of woman.

In Sons and Lovers, the clash between a mother and her sons is of supreme importance. The unsatisfied mother, excessively indulgent in her sons' life disables them to strike vital and fulfilling relationships with other persons. This abnormal hold and indulgence of the mother is disastrous for the sons as well as the mother. The relation between the mother and sons, which should have been a source of inspiration and comfort, turns, into a corroding, blighting factor which gradually finishes one of the sons (William) and also presents obstacles in the other's (Paul) life. Gertrude Morel was a woman from an educated family who was interested in discussions regarding religion, philosophy and politics. The natural attraction for the opposite resulted in her marrying Walter Morel who was dispositional entirely opposite of her. Walter was soft, non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gambling person, whereas she was curious and receptive finding pleasure in listening to other folk:

"The dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh, like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her own life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her" (SL12).

The relationship which was a result of external or superficial attraction was shallow and soon Mrs. Morel realised that Walter Morel lived a life of instincts and not of thoughts. When she tried to have some serious talk with him, "She saw him listen deferentially but with understanding" (SL14). Adding to her disgust was her chance discovery of the unpaid bills and the information that the house they lived in also did not belong to water, although he had claimed the house to be his. His lies



invoked a kind of disregard and contempt in her heart for her husband. Adding fuel to the fire was her awareness that water was not a teetotaler, which he proclaimed to be during their marriage by wearing, “the blue ribbon of teetotalers” (SL14). Such unfaithfulness and lies were too much for her to bear since she was a puritan. These incidents created an unconscious distance between the husband and the wife. These incidents created an unconscious distance between the husband and the wife still she did not lose hope and tried to make Walter undertake his responsibilities, but her constant nagging further makes them distant and her efforts of improving him result in his losing his temper and also assaulting her physically. Dynamics of self and society is evident in their relationship right through the novel. They remain two sides of a river, unable to emotionally feel each other’s warmth. Their relationship deteriorates with the passage of time. Lawrence records:

“The pity was, she was too much his opposite.
She could be content with the title he might
be; she would have him the much that
he ought to be. So, in seeking to make
him nobler than he could be, she destroyed
him. She injured and hurt and scarred herself,
but she lost none of her worth” (SL 20).

Walter Morel is an allegoric character representing Lawrence’s view of “thinking with the blood” (Moore 180). His actions are all guided by instincts. Lawrence described Walter as “Not knowing what he was doing he often did the right thing by instinct... Whereas Gertude is a very thoughtful person” (SL 13). These differences between them result in friction and clashes and, in turn, indifference to each other. The unsatiated mother turns towards her elder son. The emotionally denied person looks and longs for love and comfort and groups the meekest ray of love that may be coming from anyone or anywhere. Such unstated people lead to a chain of abnormal relations as they look for love outside the relationship they ought to be having love from Paul’s mother directs her whole attention and love towards the son who is a source of comfort for her. The novelist describes:

“His mother loved him passionately. He came just when her own bitterness was hardest to bear; when her faith in life was shaken, and her soul felt diary and lonely. She made much of the child and the father was jealous” (SL 18).

The attention, which due to be paid to Walter is denied to him and the son, like a rival, is chosen for the shower of love and care, which makes the father jealous. The abnormal relations further lead to abnormal conditions in family and society. Lawrence based this novel on his experiences in his family and their impact on his relationship with the outside world. He based this novel on split theory which is about split in the soul and body of a person. William and Paul Morel are unable to affirm their manhood, because of their dominant mother who holds them back. The dynamics of self and society clearly affects the loves of the Morels and frustration and quarrel becomes their family motto. Garnett writes:

“In description of incident, even more than in revelation of character, Mr. Lawrence shows that he is a master ... shows the mark of genius and inspiration as distinct from that of talent and invention. No other English novelist of our time has so great a power to translate passion into words, but that is neither the beginning nor the end of his art” (P 58).

Lawrence has shown the dynamics of self and society in *Sons and Lovers* and this merging of self continues in all his subsequent novels. The dynamics of self gets merged with the dynamics of society in life. This is Ursula’s problem in *The Rainbow*, Birkin’s in *Women in Love*, Alvina’s in *The Lost Girl*, Aaron’s in *Aaron’s Rod*, Somer’s in *Kangaroo*, Lou’s in *St. Mawr*, Kate’s in *The Plumed Serpent* Connie’s in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. The clashes of human values emerge in all the novels of Lawrence. Lawrence’s life was dominated by the dynamics of self and society as all his family members and friends were closely linked to his own self dynamics. In a nutshell, Lawrence has given us a story based on real happenings of life. Life is nothing but a dynamics of self and society which shapes our actions and personality as in the case of Lawrence.

Works cited

1. Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. London: Penguin, 1993.
2. Carswell, Catherine. *Critics on D.H. Lawrence*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971.
3. Draper, R.P. (ed). *D.H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1979.
4. Fleishman, Avrom. *D.H. Lawrence : A Centenary Consideration*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1985.
5. Lawrence, D.H. *Sons and Lovers*. New Delhi: Rupa and Company, 1999.
6. Moore, Harry. T. *D.H. Lawrence Miscellany*. London: Heinemann, 1961.
7. Nicolson, Harold. *D.H. Lawrence: Penguin Critical Anthologies*. London: Penguin, 1967.
8. Salgado, Gamini. *A Preface to Lawrence*. New York: Longman, 1987.