

D.H. Lawrence's literary art and skill in effecting the emergence of the dynamics of self and society in his fictional world: An Analysis

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Received: May 19, 2018

Accepted: June 26, 2018

ABSTRACT

*This research paper attempts to outline the literary art and skill of D.H.Lawrence. Although relativity was for him a defining feature of the novels from as such, his novels were powered by emotional and moral absolutism. His constant discrimination between what makes for life or death. Lawrence evolving relationship with Russian literature on the one hand and Communism. on the other. And his profundity was reflected in the novel **Women in Love**.*

Keywords: *Oedipus complex; nature and flowers, decay and rebirth, the triangle of desire.*

It is generally held that English fiction reached 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. In the words of W.H.Auden, Lawrence could never fail to delight the readers with the enormous pleasure he took in writing. The essential greatness of Lawrence was perhaps apprehended when the admirer V.Sackville West spoke of him as sharing the intensity of Tolstoy, the indignation of Carlyle, and the exuberance of Walt Whitmen. Lawrence's reputation as an artist, novelist, poet, critic letter writer and painter came to stay rather permanently on the literary map. The multifaceted personality of D.H.Lawrence was appreciated by many critics, for he presented something special to his generation. As he was deeply affected by the happenings around him, his works might be considered as nothing but a mixture of self and society.

As Lawrence affected the actions of the people all around him, his novels were based on his experiences accumulated through various phases of life entering into the veins of many. Rowse assets rather confidently:

"he was a part of me: he had entered into my veins at a very vulnerable moment, of adolescence changing into maturity. He was woven in the fibers of my mind and heart" (63).

Though he has been dead for more than 50 years, he shows no sign of lying down. Lawrence is more alive today than at any other time in the twentieth century. His novels short stories and plays have shown their power to hold vast audiences spell-bound. The high seriousness of his avouched purpose as novelist that the purpose of art is moral, not aesthetic, not decorative, but moral has been admitted. He triumphantly claims:

"I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher and the poet, Who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog" (P 185).

commenting upon the peculiar unsettling affect Lawrence had upon his readers, Harold Nicolson says, "he always leaves a scar upon our human complacency" (P 265). Though he received a lot of criticism, he has been rightly called a visionary and prophet. Contemporary criticism has stemmed the tide against Lawrence by according him his rightful place as visionary and prophet. F.R.Leavis said that like William Blake, Lawrence had the same power of distinguishing his own feelings and emotions from conventional sentiments. He had the "terrifying honesty". One can compare him with another visionary poet Walt Whitman who celebrates from first to last the great pride of a man in himself in Leaves of Grass:

"One's - self I sing, a simple separate person

Yet utter the word democratic, the word En-masse"

Given this primary intention, all Lawrence required of his readers was a willing admission, a voluntary belief in the possibility of renewal. Catherine Carswell, a friend, biographer and admirer found in Lawrence a man of rare genius:

"Lawrence is as a name more evocative than Lenin or than Freud, his critics infallibly gave themselves away. Of all moralist he is the most demoralizing" (P 35).

It is no exaggeration to say that the hallmark of Laurentian fiction is the venture into the woman. Lawrence studied, loved and understood the 'woman'. There was no aspect of the female psyche which escaped his notice. The Laurentian woman is all woman. He documented the delicate nuances of feminine beauty, her appeal and vulnerability. By the same token, there was no escape from his relentless expose of the dominating, jealous and frustrated women. Lawrence thus showed all types of woman in his novels and himself was very much involved with all these women. However, Lawrence stands singled in his attempt to lay bare naked passions of woman.

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, inventors of a new terminology which made free use of words such as solar plexus. He never looked back at the past at things as if they were curiosities of human psychology nor was he interested in literature as literature. Comparing his with Proust, one feels that he echoes nobody, continues no tradition, is unaware of the past, of the present save as it affects the future. As a writer, this lack of tradition affects him immensely. The thought plumps directly into his mind; up spurt the sentence as round, as hard, as direct as water thrown out in all directions by the impact of a stone. Just as Virginia Woolf highlighted the sheer spontaneity of expression which was the direct offshoot of Lawrence's lack of tradition, he invented his own tradition out of his own self-dynamics which he wearied with the dynamics of outside society in his novels. Having travelled a lot and had many friends all over the globe, Lawrence is said to have 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.

Most of his novels deal with human relationship and it is here that the dynamics of self and society makes his novels alive and interesting for his readers. Dynamics of self and society is very much evident in his characters, incidents, objects and story-shapes which he gives to his manuscripts. He always strived 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 friend's. 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 is said to have excelled in writing about non-human nature, writing as a stranger about places and people he sees for the first time, criticizing books and describing dynamics of self and society between man and man or man and woman. The dynamics of self and society plays a vital role in shaping the psyche of his characters in his novels.

Lawrence's novels are autobiographical in nature as he depicts the dynamics of self and society within him and with the people around him. Murry felt that Lawrence's perceptive comments in one of his greatest books – ***Fantasia of the Unconscious*** was applicable to his own life:

"That is Lawrence's history of his own life. It is the history of ***Sons and Lovers*** told again, eight years later, with the added insight and detachment that comes of maturity. If we are to understand the notions of this greatly gifted, greatly tortured man, we must grasp the fundamental history.

Everything derives from it. He was and he will say so painfully at the last, a sex-crucified man" (P 235).

One cannot escape the influence of the dynamics of self and society through his novels. E.M.Forster considered Lawrence "greatest imaginative novelist of our time". While Aldous Huxley insisted like Leavis upon his greatness as an artist, Lawrence was always and escapably an artist" (P 254). Commenting upon the Laurentian genius, F.R.Leavis said:

"to read Lawrence's best work is to undergo a renewal of sensuous and emotional life and to learn a new awareness" (PP 231-232).

No doubt, Lawrence's novels bring renewal to a dead life, emotions to a stone heart and love to hateful man. He was special in his personal life where he openly accepted his weakness for passions. All his personal traits and his experiences make him almost a complete man of very unique dynamics. Jessie chambers observes:

"He aimed to enter into other lives and not only human lives. With wild things, flowers and birds, a rabbit in a snare, the speckled eggs in a hole in the ground, he was in primal sympathy" (P 298).

D.H.Lawrence was aware of the fact that the world was undergoing a change. He noticed the passivity in the mala, the masculine protest in the woman mechanization. But still it seemed that there was craving for unity. This new man may be called at its preparatory stage i.e., the stage of awakening that we find in ***Sons and Lovers***, ***Lady Chatterley's 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***, the masterpiece of Lawrence exhibits "a revelation of the strength and weakness of his Utopian ambitions". It

deals with Lawrence's exploration of a whole man alive in the flesh stressing the role of self and society in bringing a change in the useless and meaningless life. Lawrence was aware of the fact the entire world was undergoing a withdrawal symptom. The passivity in the male, the masculine protest in the women, mechanization and egalitarianism and rationalism were but so many aspects of the recoil. However, at a deeper level, there was a blind striving towards unity. This is what, according to Paul Rosenfield, Lawrence recorded. "The realization toward which every piece of his presses is the resolution of this conflict, either in death or in some new leasehold of the whole man, some new assurance and integrity" (P 218). Dynamics of self and society press Lawrence for a change which is necessary as life has lost its interest.

Lawrence's personal and social experiences play a major role in the shaping of all his major novels. It is here that the dynamics of self and society are placed side by side. Lawrence's novels reflect his secret relationship with almost all his girl friends, friends and his close relationship with his own mother as his father was unable to give love and warmth to his mother. The outside influence of money of his girl friends and the dynamics of self and society play a vital role in shaping the self dynamics of Lawrence.

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. It is his autobiographical novel carrying universal appeal and enlightening Lawrence's views regarding dynamics of self and society. As the name indicates this novel deals with something which is quite untalked and unacceptable – "a relationship between Paul Morel and his mother" (Ford 282). It does stress the strain of mothers 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 conscious thinking of the people involved and help us to understand these relations in a better light. It is here that one can see the dynamics of self and society dominating the life of a protagonist and he remains in dilemma whether to accept his mother or go by his own choice of woman. 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, and found pleasure in listening to other folk:

"The dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed of 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" (Sons and Lovers 12).

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 little 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 scared herself, but she lost none of her worth" (Sons and Lovers 20).

Walter Morel is an allegoric character representing Lawrence's view of "thinking with the blood" (Moore 180). The abnormal relations lead to abnormal conditions in family and society. The dynamics of self and society depicted by Lawrence through these relationships between a mother and her husband sons. **Sons and Lovers**, like so many of Lawrence's novels, ends with an incomplete or ambivalent resolution, an open question which the next novel can then take as a point of departure. It is left for Ursula in **The Rainbow** to discover that life is to be found in sunshine or in darkness, but in sterile moon light or the stagnant gleaming and fluming of cities:

"The stupid, artificial, exaggerated town, fuming its lights. It does not exist really. It rests upon the unlimited darkness, like a gleam of coloured oil on dark water, but what is it? – nothing, just nothing" (The Rainbow 498)

Lawrence has shown the dynamics of self and society in **Sons and Lovers** and this merging of self continues in all his subsequent novels. Merging of self in Lawrence's characters continues in all her novels. The dynamics of self gets merged with the dynamics of society in life. This is Ursula's problem in **The Rainbow**, Birkin's problem in **Women in Love**, Alvin's problem in **The Lost Girl**, Somer's problem in **Kangaroo**, and Connie's problem in **Lady Chatterley's Lover**. 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.

The Rainbow is a forerunner to Lawrence's dynamics of self and society process for it does explore the dynamics of self and society in all its respects, creative as well as destructive. Lawrence is of the opinion that husband and wife should not impose restriction on each other. Rather, they should trust each other and sex should be a medium of emotional satisfaction. Intermingling of the dynamics of self and society can be seen in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* which are examples of Lawrence's genius and both these novels complement each other in the fulfillment of these dynamics. The women – an embodiment of "the unknown" mystery the man has to plumb. *The Rainbow* is a novel of passion. Tom Bragwen is isolated in his awareness of love being the primordial passion. He desired, "to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses. He had something to lose which he was afraid of losing, which he was not sure even of possessing. Lawrence shows here how the dynamics of self and society is at the heart of society. The business of love was, at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him" (Sagar 48). While highlighting the Lawrencean dynamics of self and society which was able to encompass the chaos of the modern world, Herbert T.Seligman,

"Lawrence has found the mechanism that relates the inner lives of these men to their world; driving them to erect in the hideous machine industrialism of our day a memorial to their spiritual impotence. They serve the machine or like skrebensky they serve an abstraction called the state. They desire of love, not fulfillment in rhythmic being, but dope, anodyne of women, they seek the death of the days living death" (PP 155-156).

Both *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* are variants of the same process. Regeneration being a matter of both creation and destruction. Merging of the dynamics of self and society is a precondition for this regeneration of the self. Lawrence, through *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* tries to usher in the hope of a better world where the dynamics of self and society will merge into a single whole to give some meaning to this otherwise meaningless life of ours. Still there is a hope for regeneration and revival through mergence of these cloches of human values. This will bring healing into the lives of many of us as we have lost the much needed vivacity, zeal, enthusiasm and spirituality in our lives. Thus, Lawrence's novels bring to us the hope of a rainbow o a bright future and the redemption of our lives. Thus, what is needed is mergence of the dynamics of self and society to complement human effort towards revival and regeneration. These dynamics provide us positive energy for the fulfillment of our goals. Lawrence's effort for the liberation of human spirit deserves to be hailed.

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