

SHIFTING AFFECTION OF MOTHER AND ROMANTIC CONFLICT OF SON IN ‘SONS AND LOVER’

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Abstract

D.H. Lawrence's third novel 'Sons and Lovers (1913) which is rendered as his first semi-autobiographical master piece delineates the tense, unhappy and uneasy life of the Morel family quite resonated as well as oscillated with the intricate affections and emotions. The present paper sets forth that how this seminal work of 20th century unearths the shifting affection of Gertrude (mother) and the emotional journey of Paul (Son) which was ripped up between his overbearing and possessive mother and two very different lovers. This paper also tries to accentuate the social-mobility within class conflict, the scuffle between intellectualism and sensuality, the tension between passion and responsibility and mother-son fixation which are aesthetically ingrained within the framework of shifting affection of a mother and romantic conflict of a son in 'Sons and Lovers'

Keywords

Auto-biographical, affection, social-mobility, class-conflict, intellectualism, sensuality, responsibility.

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The present paper emphasizes on unveiling the constant shift in affections and emotions – love, desire, hatred and frustration – as Mrs. Morel shifted her affection from her husband to son William first and then on Paul. This paper also displays Paul's romantic conflict within two contrasting lovers, Miriam Leivers and Clara Daves. This is what Becket means when he says D.H. Lawrence's novel mainly talk about relationship ... especially the relationship between man and woman (Fiona Becket, 134)¹. So, the total artistic endeavour of D.H. Lawrence as a novelist lies in his expression and exploration of man-woman relationship, AT THE LIVING MOMENT. Whether we read, 'The White Peacock' or 'Women in Love' or 'The Rainbow' or 'Sons and Lovers', we find that the central thematic stream of all these novels envisages the human relationships translated by D.H. Lawrence in terms of Birkin-Ursula, Gerald-Gudrun, Tom Lydia, Will-Anna, Ursula Skrenbensky as well as Paul-Miriam-Clara Syndrome. But this study of human relationship in the novels of D.H. Lawrence must be differentiated from the similar study of human relationship in novels of Proust, Woolf, Mann. While in these latter novelists, an individual is treated merely as a psycho-spiritual entity cut off from the external world, but in case of D. H. Lawrence, an individual is an inevitable extension and ultimate result of persistent impingement of outer socio-cultural rhythms of life on the mind, psyche and soul of man. This is what David Daiches means when he says that the novels of D.H. Lawrence are the sociological study into the heart, mind and soul of man at a given moment of time. This in terms also accounts for a beautiful blend and harmonious synthesis of Tradition and Modernity in the novels of D.H. Lawrence in general and "Sons and Lovers" in particular.

In 'Sons and Lovers', the novelist has given a minute and detailed account of a coal-mines of Nottinghamshire with its mining activities, its colliery, Lanes dwellings, school and gardens etc. So, In spite of this traditional approach to the socio-geographical scenes Lawrence has succeeded in enacting the human drama of man-woman, bond with psychological penetration and spiritual insight. As the title of novel 'Sons and Lovers' suggest, it's a story revolving around, Gertrude Morel, who has been a middle-class sophisticated woman married to a boorish, uncultured and uncivilized. Coal-miner Walter Morel because of which she remains unsatisfied both as a wife and as an Individual. Since Man-Woman bond in the novel of D.H. Lawrence must be established like 'Star-Equilibrium' so any attempt on the part of any partner to dominate leads to suffering and failure. That is why, "In her attempt to make Walter nobler Gertrude destroyed him"². It is this destruction and dissatisfaction which is the core of the central theme of 'Sons and Lovers' as well as the Linchpin of the vision of the novelist. That is why, Gertrude Morel drifts away

from her home and then her husband to seek intellectual satisfaction in the company of Parson and emotional satisfaction with her sons first William and then Paul. The damaging and dehumanizing Influence of this mother-Pull is so Intense that when William tries to assert his Individuality and goes away to London and marries Lily, the consequences are disastrous. After William, Paul becomes the center of attention, psychic, relief and emotional solace. who paradoxically is Lamstrung under the Impact of mother-fixation. Gertrude's constant dependence on Paul is also an Ironic recompense for a wife who was humiliated, tortured and turned outdoors by her husband during her pregnancy. So, the effect of this Oedipus complex is so powerful that Paul Morel, who is growing and grooming into a painter, finds it very difficult, nay; almost Impossible to strike and establish a fruitful relationship with any other woman he runs into. He is unable to love Miriam and this is "because of his unresolved fixation upon his mother." (Lawrence, 1994, P. 98)

According to D.H. Lawrence, the final evaluation of the loss of spiritual value, moral fabric and human vitality can be made in terms of man-woman relationship, which is a vital unit for sustenance construction of a healthy society. But when Instead of Star-Equilibrium, any of the co-partners wishes to possess and engulf the separate entity of the being then the tragedy entails. And hence the relationship between Paul and Miriam does not click, for Paul as a painter endeavours, to capture the very throb and pulsation of life which could be translated into real life as UNISON IN SEPARATION. Compared with love affairs with Miriam Paul's love for Clara seems to be the courage's yet the shortest lived. Clara Dawes is pictured as a maturely sexual, ripely responsive woman as opposite of Miriam's and "... The warmth he felt for Clara drew him away from Miriam" (Lawrence 343)³. In the same way, Paul's relationship with Clara is also fail because Clara is all-flesh given to physically and she is ready to surrender and even merge her Individual self into the self of Paul. After getting physically and emotionally satiated, Paul fails to find any meaning or relevance in continuing his relation with Clara. Rather, he succeeds in bringing about reconciliation between Baxten Dawes and Clara Dawes which according to him, is more useful to society and to their Individual selves. Provided that the present paper lays stress and even accentuates how Paul's relationship with Miriam is marked by a shift from spiritual and intellectual connection to romantic frustration. Actually, Miriam loves him with extreme intensity which he compares unfavourably to his mother and resultantly frightens as well as repels him from Miriam. While with Clara, Paul sets out a new emotional shift, seeking a purely physical relationship but very soon he realizes this relationship is

also a substitute. When his mother falls ill, he leaves Clara which clearly reveals that his passionate bonding with his mother still dictates his emotional life.

There lies the crux of the central thematic stream of the novel which is expressed and explored within a traditional structure fused with a modern vision where the Conventional features are harmonized with the convictional values of the novelists making 'Sons and Lovers' a beautiful blend of Tradition and Modernity. After having failed disengaged himself from a powerful mother-pull, Paul also remains unsuccessful in hammering out a meaningful relationship either with Mirium or Clara. The final chapter "Derelict" communicates a total transference in Paul's emotional state after his mother death. Finally, he succeeds albeit partially to liberate himself from the mother egocentricity by administering lethal morphin to ailing Gertrude an overdose Morphine that kills her, but still as an individual. He remains an indecisive as he remains imperfect as a lover. However, after declining the offer of marriage from Miriam, Paul is shown as moving towards the glimmering lights of the city which symbolically represents his renewed attempt to live and love. Ronald Draper, the most recent surveyor of the Lawrence canon, said, "the finest achievement of Sons and Lovers is its quickening truthfulness to actual life."⁵ (Gilbert, 1997, P. 83)⁴. In this way, we find that though cast in a traditional framework 'Sons and Lovers' is a powerful statement of on the necessity and relevance of healthy man-woman relationship particularly within a contemporary sociocultural matrix of Industrialized and Urbanized society where the human vitality and Individuality seems to have been sacrificed at the altar of technology, modern science leading to a conflict and confusion of personalities that can be overcome only through the queer Lawrentian sexual APARTHEID which constitutes the central thematic stream of the novel.

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