

Women's Role with Respect to Conflict in Marriage in the Novels of DH Lawrence

Hemraj

Jr. Hindi Translator , Ministry of Panchayati Raj, India

ABSTRACT

Lawrence's father was a miner in the local colliery, and his marriage to Lydia was not a successful one. His mother was a school teacher and belongs to a well-to-do family. This class conflicts are played out in Lawrence's work. His work originates from the conflict between his parents which shattered the domestic life of the family. His mother insisted on children being educated to an extent which exceeded the father's wishes. The same situation is portrayed in *Sons and Lovers*. Somehow Lawrence is optimistic about marriage. He hardly attacks the institution. Lawrence is a social reformer, still striving to free the people from the established institutions. He sees marriage as an institution which fulfills the aspirations of men and women, but never as an ultimate goal.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lawrence had concerned himself with the problem of achieving fulfillment in life, and suggested marriage as the means of obtaining this fulfillment for his characters and for himself. In his novels there is a feeling that complete fulfillment cannot after all be found in marriage, or that Lawrence cannot see where one is to go when one is fulfilled in a manner described in his novels. The problem of conduct remains increasingly pressing. What is the fulfillment man do? How should he spend this time and energies? Should he engage in political activity, and, if so, in what sort of political activity? Or should he spend his time cultivating his own garden, ignoring the condition of the world around him, secure in his own little world of apparent meaning?

The relationship between Ursula and Birkin in *Women in Love* is at once meant by Lawrence to be the ideal solution to those problems with which he had to deal, and it is also the beginning of a new and

larger problem. *Women in Love* ended on a note of indecision as to what in fact Birkin had actually achieved: his marriage to Ursula is shown as possessing some considerable positive value, but there is doubt as to its completeness. Lawrence's later novels *Aaron's Rod* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* take up the problem where it was left in *Women in Love*. These novels come with a solution in a different way. But none of them comes near a solution which can be adjudged more satisfying than that already found in the rainbow and *Women in Love*.

In *Sons and Lovers*, Gertrude Morel is disillusioned in her marriage with her husband. Her attachment to her son, Paul, has a most unhealthy effect on his emotional life. Mrs. Morel has a proud unyielding temper. She had some typical middle class values. She doesn't like the company of the miners though her husband is a miner. She has her own romantic dream of life before her marriage to Mr. Morel. But she feels frustrated in her marriage with Mr. Morel. She is filled with extreme bitterness. Mrs. Morel like

intellectual life. She is found of discussing issues related to philosophy, politics and religion. She finds her husband a misfit in such things. She feels totally estranged from her husband. In fact she is responsible for their broken married life. She was too much his opposite. She behaves in a ruthless manner towards him.

Lawrence tries to illustrate that a marriage can be a source of fulfillment if both husband and wife can share their views in a positive manner, and do not impose their views on the other. There is always a lack of understanding in the relationship between Mr. Morel and Mrs. Morel especially Mrs. Morel dictates her terms of ideologies on Mrs. Morel which he does not like. In this novel, Lawrence has only depicted the common reasons which attributes to the several relations in marriage, but has not suggested any solution. In this regard this novel can rightly be called problem novel, full of hardships arising out at different situations. Even the end of the novel is not giving any note of solution to this particular problem.

Mr. Morel is depicted as the one who displays the qualities of male oriented society and the wife as a strict conformist in moral behavior. The personality of Mrs. Morel dominates the entire novel with her intelligence and strong will, loving but stifling. Miriam lacks the capacity to grow in harmony with her partner. *Sons and Lovers* is the first of Lawrence's novel that has many claims to greatness. It portrays a woman of character and refinement who goes into the lower class and has no satisfaction in her own life, than how can she have a passion for her husband, so the children are born not of passion. The novel, however, portrays the economic basis of women's oppression. The first quarrel that takes place between the Morels centers on Mr. Morel's financial deceit. Mrs. Morel is constantly at a disadvantage because of the lack of financial independence. In their battles, Mr. Morel exploits his position as breadwinner and Mrs. Morel's helplessness is revealed.

Mr. Morel is not an unusual or out of the ordinary miner. He is in fact very popular with his sociable drinking and his dancing, his easy going and cheerful character. But Mrs. Morel is unusual. She is exceptional and feels herself to be out of place in the community. All these are factors which lead to failure of their marriage:

'what have I to do with it? She said to herself' what have I to do with all this? Even the child I am going to have, it doesn't seem as if I were taken into account.¹

In this context of the common flow of ordinary experience, Mrs. Morel is conscious of herself as an individual of an isolated and distinctive from the collective life of the community. Morel's existence is more closely integrated with the society as a whole. He is primarily physical in nature, she is intellectual, proud and unyielding, high-principled. His nature was purely sensuous and she restores to make him moral, religious.

Gertrude Morel is well known as the thwarted, frustrated young woman of middle-class origin who fell in love with a miner because he danced well, married him and later, regretted her marriage to him and her life had become an argumentative family life. Lawrence depicts in the small but important incidents of her life, the mind that is trying to grapple with her reality and her own attempts to get out and beyond. Morel finds self-respect and a new purpose in life from her work for the Bestwood branch of the woman's co-operative guild.

But hostile husband, who found her wife getting too independent, reserved these activities. Mrs. Morel, in the midst of her contempt respects what he once was. Mrs. Morel does not always hate him. Mrs. Morel's restrictive morality, which is presented as the main cause of her husband's destruction, significantly

accommodated the vital needs of children. She begins to despise Morel, who, it seems to her, lacked principle. Mrs. Morel discovered some unpaid bills in the pocket of her husband's coat and finds out all the lies he has told her to deceive her. Lawrence's bias in sons and lovers, of course, is obviously in favour of the mother in the conflicts which take place between Paul's parents. Lawrence acknowledges that the failure in the marriage is obviously as much the mother's fault as the father's. The scenes between those are charged with dramatic force which Lawrence is able to convey with brutal realism. The tragedy of their married life is the failure of both of them to adapt to the very different background and attitude of the other, so that once the initial sensual element has pulled they spend their lives in mutual recrimination.

Mrs. Morel is opposite to Walter Morel in many ways. She fails in her efforts to improve him and make him favorable, and they drift apart when she tries to open her heart seriously to him. After the first few months of marriage, their relationship become unstable which at any time could become estranged. For all of Lawrence's sympathy towards Mrs. Morel, it is obvious that Mrs. Morel is unable to adjust in a new created atmosphere after her marriage. She finds it difficult to adjust to the demands of her marriage and does not see any sense to the values of the working-class environment.

In the *Rainbow*, Tom and Lydia struggle with each other but their marriage is ultimately a success in Lawrence's theme. Initially there were some problems in the early stages of their marriage. The women in *Brangwen Saga* learn to thrive independently of their men. Marriage is the central concern of the *Rainbow*. In Lawrence's eyes, marriage is the essential means through which man can come into direct contact with nature, and ultimately achieves moral awareness. The real significance of marriage lies in whole family relationships and not only in the awareness, moral and other that husband and wife may derive from

each other. But at the same time Lawrence feels that the actual physical sexual relationship provides the final and real moral contact.

The real achievement of Tom Brangwen's life lies in his ability to submit his will to the wider implications of life, and the same situation does not prevail in between Will and Anna in the second generation which becomes the failure in their relationship. Tom and Lydia achieve a balanced relationship which liberates them, enabling them to live from their own centers whilst dependent one upon the other. On the other hand, Will concentrates on Anna and tries to force her to accept him on his own terms, and ultimately neither of them changes significantly by the other and the marriage does not become a new birth of life for both of them. The words 'fear', 'shame', 'dread', 'disgrace' are used to comment on Will's attitude, as he refuses to release himself in the way that Tom had done:

He felt he could not alter from what he was fixed upon, his will was set. To alter it he must be destroyed. And he would not be destroyed.²

Will is always afraid of the unknown and seeks comfort and security in Anna and in his love of the church, and all of these are used as chances to escape from rather than to come into contact life. After having come into contact with this type of atmosphere, Anna comes to hate will for his dependence on her and she becomes complete and detached in herself and in her children. In between things go well, but not permanently. Sometimes will tries to be humble and admit that without his wife he is nothing, but he does all this unnaturally through fear and not through a real spontaneous in defeat for Will, though at the same time it hardly provides any victory for Anna.

Women in Love opens with a discussion about marriage. The novel explores the possibility of fulfillment in life through marriage. Marriage remains the key to meaningful existence and solution to the

ills of mechanical civilization, a perfect relationship is presented through Ursula's and Birkin's achievement. For Birkin marriage is not a supreme or exclusive relationship. He expresses it in such a fashion as to cause Ursula much uneasiness. The fulfillment through marriage is in itself a fulfillment between special kinds of people. Moral responsibility implies a freedom of selfhood which Lawrence takes for granted in Tom Brangwen, Birkin and Ursula, and denies Gerald and Will.

Women in love offers a vision of personal freedom in marriage and friendship. The marriage is a plea for emancipation, for men and women; responsible freedom is the only way to resist the dreariness of the modern world. Women in love is idealistic and challenging. Marriage is the main theme but here it is not marriage as an accomplished fact, it is the attempt of two adventurous highly individualized young women to find it possible at all. Women in Love, in fact, questions marriage. They are newly emancipated members of a class and are completely out of touch with the local scene and are free to dispose of themselves as they like. They are financially independent and are willing to take lovers. For such advanced young women in early twentieth century, marriage was ceasing to govern all relations between the sexes. Higher education was presenting young women with such opportunities and problems. The sisters and their lovers are advances two generations later, their debate about marriage and society can still seem up-to-date. The novel conveys the doubts of its time about marriage and about the social stability.

The Crichton and Brangwen parents have lives in a world that took marriage for granted as sacred and permanent institution. William Brangwen tells Birkin that it is no good looking sound afterwards when it's too late. Birkin's reply that if one repents being married, the marriage is at end. He is understandably angry when Ursula treats her wedding as a private, not a family affair. Although the sisters scoff at their

parents' domesticity. The chief actors of women in love are both professionally emancipated a spirituality uprooted, so that a correspondingly greater strain is thrown on their private relations. In conversation, Birkin says to Gerald 'It seems to be there remains only this perfect union with a woman-sort of ultimate marriage and there isn't anything else.'³ But this sort of ultimate marriage is not a matter of love. It is to be something beyond love. Ursula at first feels like any ordinary girls and wants love. She sees Birkin's desire for something more as a mere lust for bullying and domination and the fight between them begins because she will not accept his notions. Lover gives out in the end, he says, he does not want 'meeting and mingling; you are quite right; but an equilibrium, a pure balance to two single being: as they stare balance each other'⁴

At the beginning of women in Love, Gudrun and Ursula talk discursively about marriage. Gudrun suggests that the experience of wife-hood, may, after all, be a necessary treasure in one's life. But Ursula is skeptical that marriage is an experience, 'more likely', she says, 'to be the end of experience.'⁵ This voracious appetite for experience is not unique with Ursula: her mother, Anna, possessed it in its barest state and her grandmother, Lydia had merely disguised it under her aristocratic pretensions, her foreignness, one aim in tracing the generations of women is to demonstrate the progressive shades of their meaning in their appetite for experience. In Lydia, it is partially subdued by conventions only to stir beneath as melancholic and frustrating. In Anna it is wild and undirected and self-confusing. Only in Ursula does this appetite become truly attached to a conscious being, become ultimately directed and civilized. Therefore, the striving and the failure of achievement of the earlier generation prepares us for the vital center of the novel; the education of Ursula through whom the preceding and partial impulses are carried takes us to successful completion of the novel.

Lady Chatterley's lover is without doubt the best known of Lawrence's novels. In this novel the plot deals with the marriage of Sir Clifford Chatterley and his wife Connie, and begins by detailing the failure of Connie to find any fulfillment or meaning in their marriage, partly through the fact that Sir Clifford is a cripple and is confined to a wheel chair. In the process Connie attempts to find sexual consolation elsewhere, initially and uselessly with the artist Michaelis. After some brief period she resumes sexual relationship with Mellors with more success and in a meaningful way. All these developments cause hurdles for Sir Clifford Chatterley and Connie in making their marriage a meaningful way of life.

In most of his novels, Lawrence is unable to seek a reasonable solution to the problems his character face in their struggle to life. He does not give a satisfactory conclusion to the problems. Many of his novels ends on an unreal note of optimism. He is in difficulty in illustrating his characters' development in acceptable terms. Marriage has always been the key factor as the central idea in his novels. He regards marriage as an institution through which the ultimate aspirations of men and women can be achieved throughout the life. But he does not see any compulsion to bind in this relationship only for the sake of customs and culture. Lawrence acknowledges the marriage as a necessary custom when it gives pleasures to life. He did not approve marriage as a burden to life which is without any real attachment to individual. Lawrence emphasizes on some basic needs which should be employed in life in order to make marriage an ultimate success. In his novels, Lawrence realizes that complete fulfillment can be achieved only through balanced relationship taking into account the sensitive considerations in a positive manner. He feels that there are not fixed parameters which can be attributed to the success of marriage.

Lawrence's novels focus on feminine interest. He expresses sympathy for the social plight of intelligent

women trapped in a male dominated society. In his early development as a novelist, Lawrence took up the cause of feminism, insisted on women's rights, thus opposing tyranny of the male world. He was beginning to express ideas from the feminine point of view. The great achievement of Lawrence is the recognition of the female principle of vitality competing with male principle in vitality. Lawrence admits that it has come from Hardy's women like Elizabeth-Jane, who are more intelligent and stronger willed than men. The new element developed in Hardy and Lawrence in their portrayal of women character as states of being, rather than as a defined social class and moral choice. Lawrence established the proper course of action for the individual to fulfill the desired wishes outside the marriage relationship. He achieved a special kind of fulfillment in his novels, which leads to development his ideas. He chiefly dealt with society to touch on the theme of marriage and the individual.

II. REFERENCES

Primary Sources

1. Lawrence, D.H., *The Rainbow*. Penguin Books, 1981
2. Lawrence, D.H., *Sons and Lovers*. Penguin Books
3. Lawrence, D.H., *Women in Love*. London: Grafton Books, 1989
4. Lawrence, D.H., *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1987

Secondary Sources

1. Chambers, Jessie, D.H. Lawrence: A Personal Record. London: Cape, 1935.
2. Dix, Carol. D.H. Lawrence and Women London: Macmillan, 1980.
3. Draper, R.P. D.H. Lawrence. Delhi. Vikash Publications, 1969.
4. Potter, Stephen. D.H. Lawrence: A First Study. Jonathan Cape, 1930