

## "D.H.Lawrence's Concept of Nature"

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### Abstract

The present Research Paper is a study of treatment of nature in the novels of D.H. Lawrence, one of the major novelists of twentieth century. D.H. Lawrence was a versatile genius. He was Poet, novelist, short-story writer, critic, dramatist, essayist, letter writer, historian, painter and writer of sketches and travel books. The greatness of Lawrence is evident not only in his depiction of the depth of the unconscious and in his strikingly new ideas about the various aspects of life love, marriage, sex, religion, politics, morality power urge in man, parents-children relationship, modern industrial civilization etc. but also in his skillful treatment of nature in his novels. Nature play a vital role in most of the novels of Lawrence.

**Keywords:** - The White Peacock, The Plumed Serpent, The Rainbow, Lady Chatterley's Lovers

### Concept of Nature

In the novels of D.H. Lawrence, nature, broadly speaking, has been viewed from two opposing and contrasted angles, the mystical angle and the materialistic angle. The novelist's own vision, being mystical, does not approve of the materialist's of the scientist's mode of observing nature. Whereas the Lawrence an protagonists like Birkin and Ursula view nature with a sense of energy, wonder, mystery and terror and are deeply and animatedly aware of what we may call the dark luminosity of nature, a materialist like Gerald has little to do with the beautiful and unrevealed aspects of nature. The latter is busy subjugating matter to his own ends. In the words of Lawrence, 'the subjugation itself was the point, the flight was the be-all, the fruits of victory were results.'<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, the darkness of nature persists and will always keep on persisting, but the materialists chooses to avoid it willfully by living away nature. He exclusively works under the passive instinct. On the contrary, the Lawrence an protagonist, makes an energetic and

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intuitive attempt to penetrate into the being of natural objects to show what they are in themselves. On penetrating into the fabric of natural objects, he or she finds that the objects are full of energy and flow; they have their unknown and even unknowable aspects and dimensions; they are as much alive and vital as human being are; they exist in their own right and as such, have a validity and solidity of their own. Their mystery shall always persist. Ursula is irresistibly charmed by the strange laws of the vegetable world. She had here a glimpse of something working entirely apart from the purpose of the human world. She had entered into the lives of plants. She was fascinated by the strange laws of vegetable world. She had here a glimpse of something working entirely apart from the purpose of the human world. Her view of nature is visionary, witnessing the marriage of dark and light everywhere in nature. The readers of the novels of Lawrence witness a recurring and revealing conflict between the mystical view of nature and the materialistic, scientific approach to nature. There is the element of the dark, unknown, mysterious in an about nature. A typically Lawrence an nature description underlines, emphasizes and even re-emphasizes this element not to the exclusion of the luminous element, but including it in what may be termed as a state of animated tension. Instinctive and institutional as were the responses and reactions of Lawrence as a creative artist, he felt the present of unknown modes of feeling and being in the midst of nature with the help of imagination.

In the words of Graham Hough, 'Lawrence's naturalism is radically dualistic. Reality exists only as a pair of opposites. If there is universal, infinite darkness, then there is universal infinite light, for there cannot exist a specific infinite save by virtue of the opposite equivalent specific infinite.'<sup>2</sup> Lawrence create again and again to his dichotomy, under a great variety of names. The proper relation between the opposites has been described by Lawrence as polarity, not allowing the merging of the opposites, but maintaining both in a state of mutual, complimentary balance. In 'Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine', Lawrence amply clarifies his stand thus: In the beginning, the light touches the darkness, the darkness touches the light, and the two embrace. They embrace in opposition, only in their desire is their unanimity. There are two separate statements, the dark wants the light, and the light wants the dark. But the two statements are contained within the one: They want each other.'<sup>3</sup> It is obvious from these passage that Lawrence present on integrated, inseparable picture of light and darkness.

In the novel, '*The White Peacock*', the peacock stand out as the basis symbol of the novel. 'The bird seems a symbol of the Lady Creatable of pride and vanity proceedings from resplendent and showily idealisms that victimise man.'<sup>4</sup> Nature in Lawrence is an inexhaustible source of energy and vitality. Vitality responds to vitality and discovered vitality. All around in nature. This is what exactly happens in the case of Lawrence's visualization of nature. Some of the nature descriptions of Lawrence are distinctly marked by 'encounters between man and the non-human,

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the perpetual mystery of the animal and vegetable creation.<sup>5</sup> Lawrence is trying to show that when man faces threat to his existence or supremacy in this universe, his attitude undergoes a sudden change and faced with unpleasant and unsavory situations, he sometimes becomes very cruel and callous. Obviously Lawrence's vision of nature emanates from his vision of man and life. In fact, both visions are one organic whole, indivisible.

The influence of Wordsworth on the psyche of Lawrence cannot be in any way minimised and underestimated. Both of them are mystically inclined and do not fall a prey to the dichotomy between the subject and the object. Both of them draw their heroes from the domain of nature. Both of them are clear and bitter critics of the industrialised and mechanised society of the day. Wordsworth's softness, sense of peace and tranquillity is not shared by Lawrence who is deeply and intensely involved in any concerned with the darker and wilder aspects of nature. Obviously Lawrence's emphasis is on being 'alive'. The Cosmos is alive and is the fountainhead of all vitality and power. He believes that life is a single whole. That is why he cannot accept the short-sighted approach of the scientist.

However, Lawrence regards man as one single whole who vibrates with life. This is perhaps the reason that the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet have all failed to appreciate the true a spirit of life. Lawrence remarks:

Nothing is important but life. And for myself, I can absolutely see life nowhere but in the living. Life with a capital L is only man alive.<sup>6</sup>

Increasing industrialisation of the countryside in England was a great jolt to Lawrence as he viewed it as a severe and unforgivable encroachment on the world of nature. The coal mines were a clear indication of industrialisation. He was convinced that from then onwards, there would be rapid strides towards industrialisation and mechanization. Man's spirit would be subjugated and crushed and his links with nature snapped. The forces, responsible for isolating man from Nature can be traced from Christianity, intellectual consciousness, industrialism and mechanization. As industrialization picked up, the old words of nature got diminished. Thus Kate in *'The Plumed Serpent'*, says, 'I like the word, the sky and the earth and the greater mystery beyond.'<sup>7</sup> Lawrence was conscious of the crushing and demoralizing effect of the present day civilization on natural human life. From 'The White Peacock' onwards in many of his writings, he has written about the gradual estrangement of man from nature and its effect on his life. In fact, when Lawrence talks of growing industrialism and isolation of man from nature, he does so with a feeling of regret. He shows the slow but steady growth of industrialism in two stages. In the initial stage of industrialism, the colliers had not lost contact with nature. Lawrence had seen the country during his childhood days. It was then a altogether different area. The life was a strange

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blend of industrialism and old agricultural England. The dialect was broad Derbyshire. Men of his father's age could not really read.<sup>8</sup>

However, it is obvious that Lawrence makes a subtle distinction between disinterested love of flowers and love of flowers as possession. Most women regard flowers as possession and objection of decoration. If they see a flower that appeals to them, they are at once tempted to pick it, pluck it. This satisfies their sense of possession and egotism. However, Lawrence is really impressed with the attitude of colliers which is one of devotion to the beauty of nature. He remarks:

Yet I have seen, many a collier stand in his back garden looking down at a flower with that odd, remote sort of contemplation which shows a real awareness of the presence of beauty.<sup>9</sup>

In *'The Rainbow'*, Tom's death has its own significant, symbolic value. At this stage, he attains the stature of a patriarchal figure who embodies a distant world which dies with him. While the old generation stands for its proximity to nature, the new generation is caught between its attachment to the past and the emerging social set-up, with its emphasis on industrialisation. Lawrence believed that industrial life is a scar on each member of society. Charm had almost gone out of life. People had become narrow in their outlook. Through Paul Morel in *'Sons and Lovers'*, Lawrence expresses his disapproval of the coal fields. That Paul moves away from the restrictions of this life, clearly shows his protest against being born into the prison of the working class. Machine has undermined man's dignity and taken away from him the joy of creative work with dignity and taken away from him the joy of creative work with his hands. When man tries to disown the forces that bind him to nature and the origin of his own being, he becomes exhausted, fretful and dissatisfied. In *'The Rainbow'*, the novelist gives us a glimpse of the life of the working class in England. Lawrence cannot ignore the industrialised society of his times. There are frequent discussions about it. He is conscious of the poor quality of life, produced by the mechanised social set-up. While *'The Rainbow'* only partly discusses this aspect, *'Women in Love'*, has it as the central theme. If, on the one hand, we find the scarred and marred landscape, we are also equally made aware of enslavement to which the poor miners are cruelly subjected.

### References

1. D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 251.
2. *A Lawrence, D.H. Miscellany*, p. 192.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
4. *The Dark Son*, p. 235.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

6. Raymond Williams, 'The Social Thinking of D.H. Lawrence', *A.D.H. Lawrence Miscellany*, (London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1961), p. 296.
7. *Nottingham and the mining country*, p. 136., p.137.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 136.