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POETIC ELEMENT: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS

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Abstract: No writer can remain unaffected by the social, cultural, political and intellectual environment of his age. Every writer depicts the characteristics of his age as he generally transcribes from life. Lawrence's life and work represent a revolt against the values and ideas of the nineteenth century. He appears to be a novelist of the abnormal simply because normality has become something abnormal during present age. D. H. Lawrence was a prolific writer. He has written poems, novels and short stories. He is one of the first grade novelists of England who makes use of the science of psychology in his novels. Lawrence was an artist eminently gifted with a prophetic vision of life. D. H. Lawrence can rightly be described as one of the most disputed genius in the history of the modern English novel. He has been excessively praised as well as excessively abused. He has often been criticized as a sex maniac and his novels are condemned for being formal. An autobiographical note runs through almost all his novels. He was a tortured soul for full forty five years of his life and his writing express his inner suffering, frustration and emotional stress and complexes. Lawrence is said to have been making a Cathartic efforts while writing all this in his novels.

Keyword: D. H. Lawrence, poetic elements, symbolism.

INTRODUCTION:

There can be numerous interpretations and dimensions of the concept or term "Poetic". According to the Random House Dictionary, "Poetic" or for the matter "Poetic novel" is that which possesses "the quality of poetry", "characteristics of a poet" and "having or showing the sensibility of a poet"¹. Webster New 20th Century Dictionary qualifies the poetic elements as that which has the characteristics of ---- poetry", or that which has "the beauty, imagination, etc. ---- of poetry"². Shorter Oxford Dictionary also highlights that the poetic in literature is that which "pertain to", feature of "Poetry" and has the quality of "imagination", and "faculty of expression"³. The term "poetic novel" is used not for a tale told in poetry or for a verse novel, but for a prose narrative conceived poetically, having some of the basic ingredients of poetry. Though it is not in the form of prose poetry or consistent rhythmic prose, yet it possesses the very soul of it, despite its apparently conventional novel-form. It is no longer anything strikingly new like "the comic epic poem in prose" of Henry Fielding in the eighteenth century.

The great romantic poets of early nineteenth century were the first to eliminate the gap between poetry and prose and then P. B. Shelly was the most vocal and consistent. He held that any work of prose was poetry if it appealed to the imagination and satisfied the senses and if it had intensity of thought and feeling, harmony in thought and emotion and a clearly musical and rhythmic language studded with images.

In the novels of D. H. Lawrence, we find the culmination of the Victorian poet- novelist's romantic belief in projecting an individual's vision of life. He explores in his novels the struggle of his characters from childhood to manhood. He poetically conceives and executes man's grand efforts in establishing relationships with other living objects

including birds and beasts. In his work, we clearly perceive a radiance which springs from a poetic fervor that finds expression in words and phrases surcharged with suggestive and symbolic richness and beauty.

A novel, being poetic does not mean that it is written in poetry or poetic prose having a certain rhyme scheme and rhythm. It is not the mere manipulation of words or highly imaginative and intensely emotional expression which makes a novel poetic, but it is the intensity of situation which imparts the true poetic effect to it. The poetic novel recognizes the living relationship between art and life. A poetic novel must have three elements in it which are the element of imagination, the element of feeling and thought and the element of technique.

Better than any other work produced so far by Lawrence, Sons and Lovers, "quite a great work" in his own estimation, is certainly his first masterpiece, which is also doubtless very rich in poetry. The novel presents a highly imaginative and an emotionally complex picture of life, and fully demonstrates the novelist's power to translate passion into words. It has glorious flashes of imagination and clearly brings out the author's remarkable poetic power of putting in words, the rise and fall of passion and the mingling of contrary passions. In fact, the poet-novelist weaves a fine web of poetry in his novel and what is most remarkable about it is that psychology, physiology and splendid poetry are interfused into one exquisite whole, which creates the impression of "something wonderful" on a serious, sympathetic reader.

Sons and Lovers acquires poetic profundity from this intensely complex situation which was also a reality of the novelist's actual life that baffled him and makes us exclaimed, "Fact is stranger than fiction". The tragic autobiographical facts, which he has, re-created artistically and poetically in this novel, were described by Lawrence

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| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> POETIC ELEMENT: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS Ankita ,Sunder Singh </p> | <p>Indian Streams Research Journal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>much before he began to write this novel, to get himself relieved of the abnormal psychological state ---- mother-fiction, the Oedipus complex relevant. A part of his long description is cited below from his letter written to Rachel Annand Taylor on December 3, 1910, "my mother was a clever, ironical delicately moulded woman of good, old burgher decent. She married below her. My father was dark, ruby, with a fine laugh. He is a coal miner ----. I was born hating my father"⁴.</p> <p>The central idea of the novel is inalienable from certain clear-cut emotional pressure which imparts poetic intensity to the book. The focal point of the thematic side of the narrative is the fundamental disturbance in men-women relationship ---- a sort of unnatural disturbance between the two sexes. It is manifested first in the deep-rooted dissatisfaction between Mr. Morel and Mrs. Morel, then in the mother's endeavour to substitute her sons for her lovers, and lastly in the sons' failure to achieve a natural adulthood and manhood.</p> <p>What make Sons and Lovers a unique poetic novel is the fact that the basic theme of the novel is expressed more through imagery and symbolism, which Dorothy Van Ghent calls "the book's poetic logic"⁵, rather than only through series of intensely emotional situations and episodes which from the narrative logic of the novel. Lawrence's imagination, as Francis Fergusson asserts, is so concrete that he does not seem "to distinguish between the reality and the metaphor of symbol which makes it plain to us"⁶. This is the reason why the most concrete realities are often presented by him as the most authentic symbols. True, commendable skill in creating images is the outcome of his sensitivity to, and passion for, the meaning of the concrete realities of life. In a word, his symbols and images emanate from his vision of life.</p> <p>D. H. Lawrence probes deep into the consciousness of his characters with a clever use of symbols. Lawrence makes an extensive use of symbols but does not let these symbols interfere with the plot because of their close knittedness with the narrative. A proper understanding of these symbols lead to a better understanding of the novel, as a poetic novel. The ash-tree has been effectively used by Lawrence to describe the sinister and dark side aspects of life. It is symbolic of the disharmony that exists between the husband-wife of the Morel family. The swing at Willey Farm is symbolic of the love-hate relation that is characteristic of Paul-Miriam relationship, similar to the backward and forward movement of the swing. The emotional lives of the characters of Lawrence are much influenced by the active participation of nature. Walking together one evening Paul and Miriam witness a large orange moon staring at them. Violent sexual passion is aroused in Paul, thus the orange moon becomes a symbol of aroused passion in Paul. Hence the symbolism used in Sons and Loves is quite simple and easy to understand but make the novel highly poetic.</p> <p>The novel is throughout interspersed with scenes and situation which are charged with emotional fervor, imaginative intensity and profound suggestiveness, usually associated with poetry of the highest order. Let us illustrate it by citing a few instances. The garden scene in the end of chapter I, is a typical example of the novelist's successful</p> <p>delineation of the identification between the real things and what they symbolize, between meaning and image.</p> <p>He paints the night, with undefined evocativeness, as "very large and very strange stretching its hoary distance infinitely and out of silver-grey fog of darkness came sounds vague and hoarse" (p. 35)⁷. The imagery of the streaming moon and moonlight has not only vastness and immense force, but also livingness and magnificence, as "the moon streaming high in face of her, the moonlight standing up from the hills in front, and filling the valley where the Bottoms crouched almost blindingly" (p. 34). In the last paragraph of this chapter, Mrs. Morel, after the emotional and physical heat of the quarrel has cooled down, forces her entry into the house and brings with her some of this "mysterious out-of-doors" (p. 35), in the form of pollen smeared on her face.</p> <p>A very short but highly evocative scene of this kind is the visit of Paul and Miriam to an orchard where Paul has unique unforgettable experience on seeing and touching a Jenny Wren's nest in the hedge. During these years of his adolescence, he is under the spell of Miriam, his first love. The nest of the bird unconsciously seems to give him the warmth of intimacy with a beloved. While thrusting his finger into the round doors of the nest, he unconsciously works his sexual way towards Miriam, who loves the nest because in it she unconsciously seeks the fulfillment of her womanly desire to build a warm nest-like well-knit home of her own to keep herself and her lover warm and happy. Mark the masterly touch with which the novelist paints this scene, "He crouched down and carefully put his finger through the thrones into the round door of the nest. It's almost as if you were feeling inside the live body of the bird: he said it's so warm. They say a bird makes its nest round like a cup with pressing its breast on it. Then how did it make the ceiling round, I wonder?" (p. 184).</p> <p>Another scene, impregnated with rare imagination and profound suggestiveness, is the one when during a country walk Paul, Miriam and Clara came across a man with a red stallion. The three are walking beside a brook and are looking, through the trees, at lovely plants and flower growing under the sunbeams. Suddenly, they see a man leading a big horse through the gullies. The red stallion begins to dance frantically and romantically and all the three- Paul, Miriam and Clara stand charmed, "The big red beast seemed to dance romantically through that dimness of green hazel drift, away there where the air was shadowy, as if it were in the past, among the fading bluebells that might have bloomed for Deirdre or Iseult" (p. 286). The appearance of a red stallion in the woods is an instance of Lawrence's poetic symbolism, in that it suggests vividly the power which drives Paul from Miriam to Clara. Thus a concrete commonplace image becomes highly evocative.</p> <p>Lawrence's poetic genius is also fully evident even in simple description of a day to day incident of pecking of hen we come across in chapter VI of the novel. Miriam wishes that the hen should peck of her hand containing some maize, but feels badly frightened before the bird starts peaking. Paul assures her that the bird will not hurt her, and while doing so he lets the hen peck at her bare hand by putting a few corns on his palm. It is after a lot of hesitation and nervousness that she at last succeeds in letting the bird peak</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">2</p> |
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| | <p>Indian Streams Research Journal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>at her bare hand. The scene is homely, but is doubtless rich in poetic beauty and suggestiveness. It is not only conveys to the reader the urgent phase of the phallic power working in young Paul and Miriam, but also spontaneously symbolizes the large reality owing to its, truthfulness to the actual way in which a hen peaks and the feeling its arouses in a young girl, like Miriam, who has no earlier experience of it.</p> <p>The abundance of the functional floral imaginary in Sons and Lovers makes it look like a pastoral-symbolic narrative poem in prose. Time and again, flowers, with their colors, perfume and pollen, represent in variegated scenes and situations varied things, including the vital force moving vibrantly in the world, portrayed by the writer in this novel. For example, in the first meeting between Paul and Miriam, flowers constitute the central place in their relationship. Thus; his first address to her is caused by a cluster of flowers in the garden of Willey Farm where she lives with her parents. Lawrence makes a commendable use of floral imagery, embedded in intense imaginativeness and emotionalism, to depict Paul's tormenting emotional struggles, pertaining to the love-relationship between Miriam and him, and between his mother and him. The functional and artistic use of the floral imagery in the scene, given below is truly poetic in its depth and breadth, "The beauty of the night made him want to shout. A half-moon, dusky gold, was sinking behind the black sycamore at the end of the garden, making the sky dull purple with its glow. Nearer, a dim white fence of lilies went across the garden, and the air all around seemed to stir with scent, as if it were alive----. The scent made him drunk. He went down to the field to watch the moon sink under-----" (p. 358-59).</p> <p>Besides the major characters- Paul, Miriam, Clara and Mrs. Morel, even a minor character like Mr. Morel, whom the novelist models after his father, has unmistakable touches of Lawrence's poetic imagination. Mr. Morel and the coal pits, where he works, are robed in exquisite symbolism. He is symbolic of the simple assertion of biological life force and this is the reason why he is determined to live and enjoy life at every cost, while his sons and wife want to die. Mr. Morel is closely associated with the coal pits where he descends every morning and from which he ascends every night exhausted and blackened. This regular descent and ascent may be said to stand for the regulated occurrence of death and life and of sleep and awakening. Following lines bears witness to it, "Now look at that! Said Mrs. Morel. Mother and son stood on the road to watch. Along the ridge of great pit-hill drawled a little group in silhouette against the sky, a horse, a small truck and a man. They climbed the incline against the heaven. At the end the man tipped the wagon. There was an undue rattle as the waste fell down the sheer. Slope of the enormous back ----. And so is the pit, he said. Look how it heaps together, like something alive almost- a big creature that you don't know----" (p.153). Extensive use of symbols are also seen in this chapter as, "And all the trucks standing waiting like a string of beasts to be fed" (p. 154).</p> <p>The chapter titled The Test on Miriam contains a beautiful poetic scene soaked in intense emotionalism. This scene precedes the revelation of the strife between Paul and Miriam, and is a very fine example of Lawrence's power of delineating of the conflict objectivity. The juxtaposition of Paul and Miriam on the one hand, and the four dead birds and the cherry stones on the other, is indicative of the deathly nature of this love relationship. As, "----On the rhubarb leaves, were four dead birds, thieves that had been shot. Paul saw some cherry stones hanging quite bleached, like skeletons, picked clear of flesh. He looked down again to Miriam---" (p. 348). A downpour of rain symbolically accompanies Paul's physical release, but "the dead pine leaves" (p. 351), on which he lays his face suggests the emotional sterility of his intimacy with Miriam and consequently their love affair results in a disaster. After the first sexual experience, her eyes reveal that she is "like a creature awaiting immolation" (p. 354).</p> <p>Poetically conceived and titled The Derelict, the last chapter of the novel deals with a very intense situation. Paul fully realizes that he has never lived outside of his mother and has never lived in real sense. To him life and his mother are synonymous, and since she is dead, he sees no sense in living and its aspects. His haunting sense of meaninglessness and worthlessness of life is movingly recorded in these words: "Everything seemed so different, so unreal. There seemed no reason why people would go along the street and houses pile up in the day light. ---- His friend talked to him, he heard the sounds, and he answered. But why there should be the noise of speech he could not understand -- --. He wanted everything in standstill, so that he could be with her again" (p. 498-99).</p> <p>His only hope is to find a woman like his mother, but it is clear that it may never happen. Lawrence's final picture of his poignant, tragic state of mind is marked by seductive and intense poetic eloquence; "Night in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror and holding each other in embrace, there is darkness that out passed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness and yet not nothing. Mother! He whispered ---- mother!" (p. 510).</p> <p>However, the last, concluding paragraph of the novel unmistakably evinces the novelist's unflinching faith in life, his positive and bright view of life. As, "But no, he would give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly" (p. 511).</p> <p>Thus, we see that the powerful ending of the novel, Sons and Lovers, is indubitably saturated with rich poetry, emanating from the intensity of situation and the tense mental state in which Paul Morel finds himself. No wonder even the very first review of the book, published in Standard on 30th May 1913, and highlighted the emphatic poetic note of the novel by stating that the novelist is "too often the lyrical poet making his creatures speak his thought"⁸. Again, as early as 17th June 1913, Harold Massingham, in his review of the novel in Daily Chronicle, pointed, "as a whole his work is in the most vital sense suggestive and imaginative"⁹.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">POETIC ELEMENT: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS Ankita, Surender Singh</p> |
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| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> POETIC ELEMENT: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS Ankita ,Sunder Singh </p> | <p>Indian Streams Research Journal</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ISSN 2230-7850 Volume-3, Issue-6, July-2013</p> <p>CONCLUSION: Sons and Lovers has glorious flashes of imagination and clearly brings out the author's remarkable poetic power of putting in words the rise and fall of passion and the mingling of contrary passion. The vehement poetic flame in him imparts a rare quality to his picture of life, his vivid realization of situations, his insight into characters and his power of lighting the ordinary events to blaze up in to singular significance. The book is centered upon an extremely complex situation, embodying a very intense idea and in this intensity and complexity of the basic situation and of the central idea that makes it truly poetic. D. H. Lawrence is prophetically and earnestly poetic in his great fictional work Sons and Lovers. In Sons and Lovers, his poetry is not simply an embellishment of emotions; it emanates from the fullness and contrary of his intuition and form an intense comprehension of the unity of life. From the foregoing detailed discussion and critical analysis, it has become amply evident that D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers is a poetic novel and he is a poet-novelist.</p> <p>REFERENCES: i.The Random House Dictionary of the English language (Bombay: Allied Publication, 1972), p. 1024. ii.Webster's New World Dictionary of the American language (New York: World Publishing Co. Inc., 1975), p. 1388. iii.The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 2265. iv.The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume one, ed. Harry T. Moore, P. 69. v.Dorthy Van Ghent, "On Sons and Lovers", The English novel: Form and Function (Harper Torchbooks: New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), p. 247. vi.Francis Ferguson, "D. H. Lawrence's Sensibility", Critique and Essays in Modern Fiction, ed. John D. Aldridge (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), p. 335. vii.D. H. Lawrence. Sons and Lovers. (First published 1912) Penguin Books, 1970. All subsequent quotations from the novel are from this edition and page references are given at the end of the quotation in the parenthesis (p). viii.The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume one, ed. Harry T. Moore, p. 164. ix.D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage, ed. R. P. Draper, p. 58.</p> | |
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