



D.H. Lawrence's Concept of Human Behaviour with Reference to his Novels

N. Sowmia kumar

Assistant Professor of English, H H The Raja's College, Pudukkottai 622001.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 12 July 2016;

Received in revised form:

26 August 2016;

Accepted: 5 September 2016;

Keywords

Taboo,

Sex,

Human Behaviour,

Relationship.

ABSTRACT

D.H. Lawrence is considered to be the most original writer of the first half of this century. He belongs to a period which was "a rich period of creative innovation and experiment in English Literature". The novels of Lawrence have emphasized the meaning of sex and its important role in human behaviour ever since the beginning of literature, man has always been reluctant to talk about sex. Sex has always been a taboo. Lawrence wants men and women to think sex fully, completely, honestly and cleanly. Thus he expects the human race to have a proper respect for sex.

© 2016 Elixir All rights reserved.

Introduction

A writer is usually the product of his age. D.H. Lawrence belonged to the Victorian age. It was an age of emancipation for women. Women had always been confined to the four walls of the house. A strong movement of the liberation of the women began. Darwin's theory of evolution threatened that all Christian ceremonies are merely sophistications of savage rituals. Thus people gradually came to lose their faith in god and religion.

The psychological theories propounded by Freud and Jung brought about a revolutionary change in the assessment of human behaviour. The psychological discoveries exercised a profound influence on the spheres of private and family relationships. It was accepted that mothers could be jealous of their daughters, that sons some were more attached to their mothers and daughters to their fathers, and that it was sex at the back of such attachments. It was believed that repression of sex instincts is much at the back of neurosis and abnormal human contact.

The dilemma of Hamlet was interpreted in terms of Oedipus complex. The theme of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* also revolves round the Oedipus complex. The novelist started taking greater interest in the abnormalities of human behaviour. And D.H. Lawrence found in the relationship between man and women the most important problem of his age. The modern novelist launched a kind of literary revolt against the Victorian novelist. An important aspect of realism in the modern novel is the free, uninhibited set of people. Thackeray did not have the courage to deal frankly with the sex involvement of Becky in "Vanity Fair". It would have enabled him to portray his characters more convincingly. The modern novelists do not care for such inhibitions. D.H. Lawrence felt that sexual harmony was an essential condition for the attainment of happiness in life. He regarded sex as a great spiritual passion. His novels were declared to be obscene and he was often dragged to the court on charge of producing

pornography. Time has, however, fully exonerated him and he is now acknowledged to be a great novelist.

Sons and Lovers and *Rainbow* have been chosen for a study because these novels employ sexual themes. The English sensibility, bred mostly on the Victorian prudery of the nineteenth century, instinctively revolted against it. Certain extracts have been taken from both the novels to defend Lawrence to prove that sex is an undeniable fact of life and as a novelist Lawrence has given its due importance. Sex is nothing but perfect human behaviour which helps woman to fulfill her being and man of his chief creative function. Sex contributes towards good perfect mental health. His frank discussion of sex and human behaviour has opened the mystery of the other world that is close behind us. Sex is an undeniable fact of life which contributes to the harmony of life.

David Herbert Lawrence, the prophet from Eastwood Nottinghamshire, is the first English author to go into the portrayal of the intimacy between men and women and their relationship in a candid manner. Man needs a woman and woman needs a man and their relationship brings about a union, thereby satisfying the basic urge of the human race to procreate. Simone de Beauvoir makes the following observation:

Man needs more than... like Antaeus contact now and then with the earth his life as a man should be wholly an expression of his virility, which immediately presupposes and demands woman. She is therefore neither diversion nor prey; she is not an object confronting a subject but a pole necessary for the existence of the pole of opposite sign (245)

This is the law of nature. Lawrence shocked the world with his frank and open discussion of human behaviour which was considered taboo, because sex was a dirty word. Though critics accuse Lawrence of being perverse, but we can find in his writings of human behaviour, his religiosity and spirituality.

D.H. Lawrence is considered to be the most original writer of the first half of this century. He belongs to a period which was "a rich period of creative innovation and experiment in English Literature" (Evans 353). He is grouped with the "modernists" who include James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Lewis, W.B. Yeats and Virginia Woolf. People of this period were full of hypocrisy and secrecy with regard to sexual matters. So Lawrence's frank and free discussion of sex was a great shock to his contemporaries.

In all his novels, Lawrence is preoccupied with the problems in human relationship. And of all art forms, Lawrence considers the novel a perfect medium for revealing the changing rainbow of the living relationships. The novel can help one to live and understand the subtleties of human relationships.

Lawrence found that man gave importance to the mind and machine which made life mechanical and which enabled life of its vital force. He believed that modern man was in danger of losing his ability to experience the quality of life to its fullest.

Lawrence's attitude towards sex was conditioned by his early environment and upbringing. The marriage of his parents was not a success because his father, a coal miner, married a daughter of a silk manufacturer. The ill-matched parents quarreled often and unendingly. Lawrence grew up in that atmosphere of domestic discord and strife, with the result that through out his life he considered the relationship between man and woman a form of conflict rather than a natural expression of harmony. Thus he sees the male and female principles in the universe involved in a continual conflict, a battering and tearing of each other, hence so much of suffering and misery all around.

All his novels are only of variety of use on human relationships. F.R. Lewis is true in his observation that:

Lawrence's genius was properly to be described as supreme intelligence that he was interested not in sex but in relation between man and woman. (Coombes 54)

Lawrence has been grossly misunderstood. His novels, *The White Peacock*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*, *The Lost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* along with *The Rainbow* have been labeled erotic novels. Lawrence has been named a sensuous writer. D.H. Lawrence was a man too ahead of his time and his writings are amongst the most forward-looking. His writings chief concern was "with the new man, the woman, who was potentially capable of rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the dead self" (R.H. Poole 6).

In this respect Lawrence began to write about sexual emotions involved in human behaviour which was considered a taboo because, human relationship meant sex. And sex was sin during the time of Lawrence. It was so until the sixties when there was a renaissance of sex and liberation of man's view regarding sex.

Lawrence in his novels deals with the conflict within and between man and woman. If Lawrence was highly sensuous and erotic, he had no option, but to be so, because the topic of relationship between man and woman is highly sensual and will continue to be so, as long as man and woman exist.

The novels of Lawrence have emphasized the meaning of sex and its important role in human behaviour ever since the beginning of literature, man has always been reluctant to talk about sex. Sex has always been a taboo. D.H. Lawrence himself states:

It is a pity that sex is such an ugly little word. An ugly little word, and really almost incomprehensible. What is sex,

after all? The more we think about it the less we know. (Phoenix II, 527)

Thus in the twenty first century one is still ignorant of sex. Sex is believed to be the root of all evil. Hence sex is never discussed among family members. Sex has always been misused and abused. Thus the talk of sex was always the centre of lewd and obscene jokes. Sex was never discussed as a meaningful topic.

With the arrival of D.H. Lawrence in the literary world, his works began to reveal the intimate and close relationship between man and woman. Since no one had written about sex and its appeal to both man and woman, it was widely thought to be vulgar and obscene. How could one talk or write about those intimate things which take place within the closed doors of the bedroom?

These intimate revelations of sex highlighted the experience and beauty of sex. They also communicated the human behaviour of man and woman involved in sex. For the first time, the literary world (after the initial shock) became aware of the beauty and glow of sex. This beauty and glow began to communicate to the readers, that sex is a part of human life. Sex and human life are inseparable, like life and consciousness.

Freud in his writings of psycho-analysis, has highlighted the role of sex as one of the primordial behaviour of human race. Sex is deeply ingrained in man's subconscious mind. Thus man or woman cannot escape from the strong appeal of sex which is a part of his subconscious mind.

D.H. Lawrence is aware of this urge, which burns within us. He observes:

In youth it flickers and shines; in age it glows softer and stiller, but there it is. We have some control over it; but only partial control. That is why society hates it. (A Propos 529)

One is now aware of why society hates it. It is because one is not able to have full control over the emotions of sex. D.H. Lawrence feels that human civilization should have taught one to understand sex and to let sex appeal "flow properly and subtly, how to keep the fire of sex clear and alive" ((A Propos 531). This flow if sex is the communication which has been denied to human race on account of the fact that society has labeled sex as taboo.

D.H. Lawrence's attitude to sexual relationship between man and woman has changed the face of the English novel. He has revealed abundantly the subtlety of human behaviour regarding sex.

Sex was never discussed in the novels until the coming of D.H. Lawrence. In the writings of Chaucer, even in the midst of rich diversity of characters one finds lacunae in the gamut of sex. Sex was only a subject for jest and bawdy. It was only with the arrival of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, that sex began to emerge but it was used and obscured by imagery it was Lawrence who brought the entire subject into open and its treatment was frank and fearless. Lawrence had no desire to shock. He wanted only to be truthful and to communicate the meaning and joy of sex. He also wanted to show how a woman might admire a man's body without shame and without being labeled as a wanton woman. Sex was for Lawrence a deep sense of exploration in the world of human behaviour. When Lawrence describes man and woman one learns a great deal of human behaviour and the spontaneous and vital movement of the soul.

Literature reflects human life. In life sex is a source of conflict and passion, and of love and concern, which gives us

a psychological insight into human nature. Sexual love is not only a thrilling experience but it is a creative experience too.

Lawrence struggled to create a "new consciousness" through his novels and he tried to create a proper reverence for sex among his readers. In spite of its new meaning and new vision, he became a centre of much controversy. And his novels were abandoned and suppressed for immorality. He thus became a target of vehement criticism.

One can see in the works of Lawrence, the portrayal of both man and woman, and their behaviour, and their union through the ritual of marriage is considered a holy sacrament. If one goes into any tribe or clan, society or community, one can find the ritual of marriage to be a very sacred thing. This is found even among a very primitive society.

The behaviour of man and woman in quest of human relationship wholly involves intimacy, which brings about the 'family'. Human behaviour brings about a crisis when two persons fail to understand and respect each other. D.H. Lawrence's views give his readers an insight into the crisis and make them have the right attitude in trying to understand the sways of emotions, anger, and satisfaction and so on. But on the whole, the problem arising from this unity of man and woman has been grossly labeled as sex.

What Lawrence tries to bring out in his novels, is that sex is vastly misunderstood. Sex is concerned not only with physical activity but also with human behaviour. Sex in modern connotation means only erotic and lustful emotions and thus the terminology "sex" appears to be a misnomer. People today have failed to understand that sex means

primarily one's desires and feelings which express the basic concern of love, sacrifice and responsibility.

Lawrence is the first and the only writer in English to bring out the realities of human behaviour that is 'sex' with a lot of conviction in his works. His way of presentation is very appealing and he does it with compelling immediacy. Lawrence in his novels brings out generally the emotions which are remarkable rather than the situations by which the revoked. Though his works seem to be obscene and vulgar they are the expression of life at its source and they bring out his deep concern for the future of his fellow human beings. He is concerned chiefly with the forth coming men and women.

Works Cited

- Beauvoir, Simone de' THE SECOND SEX. Ed. & tr. H.M. Parshley. London Pan Books., 1988
- Coombes, H. ed. D.H. LAWRENCE: A Critical Anthology. Britain Penguin Books., 1973
- Evans, Ifor A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE. London: Penguin Books., 1976
- Lawrence, D.H. A PROPOS TO LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER London: Penguin Books., 1929
- Poole, R.H&Shepherd, P.J. D.H. Lawrence – A SELECTION. London: Heineman. 1970