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Moral Education through Literature with Special Reference to Novels of DH Lawrence

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Abstract- Literature always has been playing the role of moral and ethical values; it's not a mere instrument for rejoicing our nerves or entertaining us. It tries to lights up our subconscious mind to bring it to the conscious stage to enable it to understand the complicacies of life and intrigue situations. Thereby, we become able to understand the nuances of life, the good and bad. Perfect idealism can be taught through literature only as literature transcends the reality; it touches down on the grand imagination. Moral and ethical values can be enthused better in an emotive and sensitive person; literature does this phenomenon abundantly. It creates the positive vibes which make the affected reader or audience crave for the adoption of values inherent literary description. There is nothing better than literature which may create the ripples, even in a cruel criminal, for the actions have been committed. He or she may repent for the crimes or wrongdoings and crave for reforms. So, literature has ever played an undisputed role in social reforms.

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Moral Education through Literature with Special Reference to Novels of DH Lawrence

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Abstract- Literature always has been playing the role of moral and ethical values; it's not a mere instrument for rejoicing our nerves or entertaining us. It tries to lights up our subconscious mind to bring it to the conscious stage to enable it to understand the complicacies of life and intrigue situations. Thereby, we become able to understand the nuances of life, the good and bad. Perfect idealism can be taught through literature only as literature transcends the reality; it touches down on the grand imagination. Moral and ethical values can be enthused better in an emotive and sensitive person; literature does this phenomenon abundantly. It creates the positive vibes which make the affected reader or audience crave for the adoption of values inherent literary description. There is nothing better than literature which may create the ripples, even in a cruel criminal, for the actions have been committed. He or she may repent for the crimes or wrongdoings and crave for reforms. So, literature has ever played an undisputed role in social reforms.

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I. Introduction

After the discovery of printing, the role of literature has been acknowledged in providing moral education. It's evident from the fact that literature could be relied upon to find the answers whenever one is in a dilemma on the best way. There is no doubt that the fictional lives have affected generations of readers and, because of their power, and beauty influenced many lives in a profoundly moral sense. The French and Russian revolutionary terror and twentieth- century horrors have made it clear that high culture and moral virtues may not be compatible. It was because literature prevalent at those times affected the common people at large than highly cultured society, particularly that literature was specially written for those depressed classes. So, the role of literary works cannot be ignored in shaping and cultivating our cultural, ethical and moral senses.

II. Moral and Ethical Values in the Novels of DH Lawrence

As moral values emanate from the deep- rooted strands of mind, morality can be best analyzed in the literary works which delve deep into the mental agonies of a character and psychologically examines the various aspects of the personality and attitudes of its characters. In this respect, DH Lawrence stands a top in developing his characters internally, psychologically. The characters in his novels go through the mental processes which determine their ultimate actions to follow. An internal conversation taking hold in the minds of characters is abundantly reflected while facing the realities of lives.

Lawrence was a prolific writer. He started his career as a writer with some poems. In his novels, he shows the conflict between instinct and intellect. The life of the individual was presented as part of a larger life flow. This larger life flow has its own currents which carry the individual's larger flow of life. In his novels, there is a penetrating criticism of modern society. Such a criticism reveals Lawrence's sustained creative effort. He interprets life in all its wide variety. His novels reveal his penetrating insight into life and terseness of life. Lawrence depicts the dehumanizing forces of our society.

Lawrence was against the machine-centered civilization of our times. He felt that our material civilization dehumanizes man. 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 the 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 the 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 refined social class and moral choice. Lawrence is concerned with the principle of life itself, invisibly realized in humanity as sex, seen visibly in the world as what we call nature. His characters are all human beings with common weaknesses and virtues, and are neither saints, nor angels, nor unredeemed villains.

Lawrence was aware of the social history and the forces at play in his own mother's life. As a young man he expected a lot too much from the women he came in contact with, and whom he loved. He wanted them to be his teachers, mentors and spiritual leaders. Lawrence searched for a long time for the perfect

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expression of his ideas in a woman, but he was disappointed. Therefore, he invented them.

Few writers in modern English literature have reached the pinnacle of uncritical admiration and vilification, and this is rightly attributed to the personality of Lawrence himself. His admirers too have not always been an asset to him. Some extreme derogatory remarks such as a sex-soaked genius', or hardly more literate, 'sick' muddle-headed, sex-mad D.H. Lawrence' have affected how Lawrence, arguably many readers have regarded the finest English novelist. The controversy that has encircled Lawrence arose out of a misunderstanding of what he was saying, and also out of confusion between a dislike of his moral attitudes, especially towards sex and a consequent inability to perceive the amazing literary genius with which these attitudes are portrayed in the novels. Lawrence has emerged as a genius out of educational and class background, devoid of middle-class advantages possessed by the literary figures of that time, some critics began to patronize him. As Lawrence himself has admitted that in the early days they were always telling him that he has got genius as if to console him for not having their inestimable advantages. Such an extreme example of this type appeared in a British council pamphlet on D.H. Lawrence in which Kenneth Young wrote that Lawrence's

'dogmatic insistence that he alone held the truth
About the universe surely reflects a deep-seated
Feeling that he had missed the fruits of the
Normal public school and university education,
Which gave his literary contemporaries a
Breadth of knowledge and assurance that he
Always lacked'[1]

Lawrence's works can be best understood by studying the class classification prevalent in the late 19th-century often, the middle class and upper-class friends were puzzled by his illogical rejection of their values and their qualified friendship.

III. Morality and Spirituality

Sex to Lawrence, is conceived as being closer to the traditional Christian view of marriage than it is to modern concepts of free love, promiscuity as can be observed from his novels, he seems to have developed a disgust for cheap exploitation of sex.

Lawrence portrays a world that has become increasingly apparent since World War I. He has always dealt with sex. To Lawrence sex, is self-justifying that it is not subject to judgment by other values but is indeed the source of other values. Lawrence is most modern in his treatment of sex. There is nothing in him of the Victorian prudery and inhibitions. He insisted on the sacred nature of sex, on the religious element in its consummation. He is the most honest man who treated the subject with great freedom, one who examined both the physical and spiritual aspects of the matter. Lawrence has been a pioneer in breaking down sexual taboos in literature in a very real sense; he was a pioneer in reinventing women the novels introducing the inner conflicts and the sexual feeling which had been denied to women in English fiction for nearly a century.

In 'The Rainbow' Lawrence openly deals with sexual matters. Ursula, daughter of Anna, remains always enquiring and unfettered. Her path is partly intellectual and partly sexual. She succumbs to the darkness as she reconciles consciousness with unconsciousness and accepts her destiny. No other writer had depicted the main tensions of industrialized man or the issues which at once separate and bind the sexes.

Sons and Lovers are based on the relationship in terms of sexual desires fulfillment. Paul is attracted towards Miriam. In course of time both Paul and Miriam realized that they were in deep love with each other, but Paul could not touch her. Then he meets Clara Dawes, wife of Baxter Dawes, who was five years senior to Paul. She was lovely and charming. She fascinated Paul. She became the mistress of Paul, but she refused to divorce her husband. Here it is quite explicit through the characters that Lawrence himself was not sure about his ideas. He was settled between old Christian values and modern open sexual relationship. Again, Paul began to meet Miriam, and finally she yielded to his savage passion. Even then he felt dissatisfied. So again, he turned to Clara. He stayed with her for some time. But still Miriam loves Paul sincerely. She always prays for his safety and security. She feels that she is absorbed in him. She feels that she is dominated by him. But at the same time, she is inhibited by her intense religiosity. Here it is obvious that Lawrence's characters are of dual nature. At the end, Lawrence is not able to give a permanent solution to this problem. He cannot make a perfect balance between the sexual relationship and spirituality. All his characters are in dilemma, they are not sure whether they are on the right path or not.

Lawrence attributed the contemporary spiritual crisis of the Christian west to this association of rationality with divinity. It not only linked the idea of sin with freedom, but also made freedom a source of all human tragedy. Lawrence maintained that organized Christianity was always on the side of mind negating the body and all sensuous experience. Thus, the genuine religious consciousness of the west, deprived of all living experience, felt thwarted and frustrated and revolted against Christianity and its morality of the rational.

[1] Kenneth Young, British Council pamphlet 1952, P 16-17

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Lawrence differs significantly from those modern primitivisms who advocate sexuality as a mode of transcendence. It was his conviction that physical consummation by itself was not the goal of life unless it resulted in the consummation in flesh. Sexuality divorced from a consummation in spirit was negative and destructive. It was no substitute by itself for the ultimate or the Transcendent. Lawrence associated sensual consummation with Aphrodite worship.

The Renaissance reversal to sensuous forms in art, Lawrence felt, was nothing but Aphrodite worship, a self-conscious pursuit of the sensuous in which the senses 'seek the reduction of flesh, the flesh reacting upon itself, to a crisis, an ecstasy, a phosphor scent transfiguration in ecstasy. This quest, he maintained, was incomplete, for it ignored the other consummation in spirit. Renaissance had substituted an absolute of sensuality for the philosophical absolute of the church. The self was negated in both of them.

IV. Divinity and Spirituality

Lawrence's approach to sex would, thus, appear to be part of a new philosophy of self born out of the rejection of the absoluteness of the concept of the original sin. Lawrence felt that the denial of sex had violated the freedom of self and had led to a false conception of reality. It had superseded the prophetic wisdom of the glory of the self and the resurrection of the body.

Divorcing the concept of sin from sex, Lawrence made a plea for a new ontology. He accepted and emphasized the finitude of self in its totality, as opposed to the doctrine of the immortality of soul and as a consequence rejected the concept of a philosophic absolute. He sought to restore back the self to its primary state of glory and rejected the path-way to redemption through a religion that advocated self-denial and self-abnegation. In the process, he became the most vocal prophet of the body.

An ethics based on the denial of self in any form had no place in Lawrence's worldview. He considered the rejection of the old morality of sin as a necessary pre-requisite of the liberation of man from the shackles of an old and dying tradition. By placing the seat of sin in human mind, Lawrence transferred the problems of sin and evil from self's finitude to its freedom. The self had to find its own salvation, not in an abstract scheme of morals, but in the loving reality, felt in through the "blood".

Lawrence's art in this respect suffered from an overemphasis on the passion and the sensual in life, but perhaps it was due for its negation since the days of Paul. The over stresses in Lawrence are, as D.W. Foster has pointed out:

> … patently the effects of a heroic attempt to restore balance where a culture has tried to live on the level of consciousness and will, dead from the neck down.[2]

Lawrence's ideas change and develop throughout his writing career and he himself was violently opposed to taking up fixed moral positions.

Essentially, Lawrence's insistence on sex is a moral insistence on the need for an awareness of the possibilities of life. The moral basis of his view of sex is important. Sex to Lawrence, is conceived as being closer to the traditional Christian view of marriage than it is to modern concepts of free love.

Lawrence remained puritanical in his attitude towards the unconventional sexual behavior throughout his life, but his deep ideas always involved a respect for life and disgust for cheap exploitation of sex. To Lawrence sex has always been remained a religious activity.

According to Lawrence soul of man and the soul of woman is new with the infinite delight of life and the ever newness of life. So, a man and a woman are new to one another throughout a lifetime, in the rhythm of marriage. Sex is the prime factor in determining balance of male and female in the universe, the attraction, the repulsion, and the transit of neutrality, always different, always new. Sex to Lawrence was important because it was the only chance civilized man had in contact with the greater universe of nature and hence of reality, but modern industrial civilization had perverted man perverted sex. Lawrence acknowledges that this perversion had resulted in a split between thought and feeling, so that men became dominated by their minds and made no effort to recreate the two in harmony. True moral awareness of life was only possible when thought and feelings were united in the whole man.

Lawrence's concern was sole with the primitive and uncivilized. for Lawrence, Sex is not merely an end in itself, not merely an entertainment or a means of producing children, but a means towards determining reality, and this reality is seen as existing in the immediate world of nature. His works are appealing in nature as his philosophy is naturalistic, and his emphasis on superb evocations of a sense of the fullness of life in his natural descriptions of places and things. According to him to be alive in the flesh is magnificent, and sexual fulfillment is the awareness of this life in oneself and the world outside. The world of nature is conceived as supplying meaning to existence, as an antithesis to the diseased world of man in society.

Lawrence's ideas are within a definite moral tradition which leads to the development of a Romantic view about nature which was essentially a 19th-century phenomenon. His ideas are not merely the distorted and

[2] DW Foster, "Lawrence, Sex and Religion", Theology, Vol. LXIV (Jan 1961) PP 11-12

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peculiar aberrations of one man. Lawrence was some sort of noble savage himself, that he was an emotional rather than an intelligent writer, and that his continued insistence on sex precludes any real regard for the intellect. Lawrence believes it to be a matter of the utmost vital urgency that man should accept his physical and animal nature. Nature is right, and in so far as it is to be followed, man's animal nature is a good and admirable quality. Lawrence develops this idea to its logical conclusion, making sexual relationships the basis of his naturalistic viewpoint, for in a world dominated by the huge excesses of industrial society, sex is the only remaining link with nature.

Lawrence sees sex as the particular problem of the 20th century, and where he and his characters are concerned it is essentially through sexual relationships of a particular kind that fulfillment in life can be obtained, but he refuses to accept that these are universal laws for all men. Most readers today understand Lawrence's position sympathetically and acknowledge that he stood for values of some impossible in a world whose traditional values were fast-changing. It is explicit that Lawrence's emphasis on sex is exaggerated, whilst he himself regarded a true understanding of it to be central to his work. He stressed on the ideas on modern civilization with which he was dealing. It is important to learn what Lawrence understood sex to be. He did not write to convey moral ideas on sex or anything else, but rather that the moral ideas emerge themselves from the imaginative experiences of the writing career. Lawrence was an emotional writer.

Lawrence is concerned about certain ideas and values, but these values are not fixed or absolute doctrine. He did not claim these ideas to be valid for all people at all times. He believed in the strong views on the suitability of the novel form. He always tried to seek new and varied techniques in his works, but as he is too emotional and unrestrained to concern himself with the technical problems. So few critics have given Lawrence the credit he deserves as technical innovator. His interpretation of the function of characters in his novels is original and imaginative. Lawrence felt that moral ideas could be discussed in the novel at a supreme level of artistry and he develops purely realistic level of new trends in the novel form. His novels can be understood by looking into the development of the themes and ideas, which dominates his novels.

Thus, it is evident from the above discussion that the study of literature provides us that very humanizing power that engages feeling and imagination, and gives the wisdom for valuing dignity and high spirits. For moral absolutes, great literature works as a source of human aspiration for the highest ideals. Literature also dealt with the complexity of moral dilemmas set against the relativity of experience. Literature has great formative power on public morality. We are influenced to behave in a particular way as our personality gets affected by the stronger personality of the author. Role of moral education through literature has been persisted, and played a key role in formulating national policies in any nation in the twentieth-century.

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