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A study of Man Woman Relationship In D. H Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915)

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Abstract:

Man woman relationship is a key feature in the novels of D H Lawrence. Most of his novels give prime importance to the relationship between man and woman in various shades between mother and son as we have seen in *Sons and Lovers* (1913) and husband and wife as well as lover and beloved in *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920). The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between man and woman in the most significant work by D H Lawrence *The Rainbow* (1915). The novel *The Rainbow* (1915) is revolved around the three generations of Brangwen family and the personal relationships between Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky, Will and Anna and Ursula and Skrebensky.

Keywords: Lawrence, Man, Rainbow, Relationship, woman.

Man woman relationship is the most essential among all other human relationships in this world. On the one hand it can be the extreme delicate and passionate on the other hand it will appear as the uttermost brutal of all other relationships. The man woman relationship is the dominant theme in the works of modern novelist David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930). It appears in various shades between mother and son, husband and wife, lover and beloved. The present article examines Lawrence's depiction of man and woman relationship in the novel *The Rainbow* (1915). In the novel he acknowledges the fact that "for a man to be a man, it takes a woman. And for a woman to be a woman it takes a man" (*The Rainbow* pg177). Lawrence believes that the founding pillar of this relationship is the marital institution. That's why by contrasting the marriages between Brangwen men and women Lawrence tries his best to explore and establish the faithful underpinning of this relationship.

Lawrence's second novel *The Rainbow*(1915) and its sequel *Women in Love* (1920) revolve around the three generations of Brangwen family , examining both vertically and horizontally , explores all the basic human relationships between men and his environment , between

the generations, between men and women as well as between instinct and intellect and above all the grassroots of marital relationship. The novel *The Rainbow* (1915) is fabricated with a series of personal relationships between Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky , Will and Anna , Ursula and Skrebensky. It focuses on "the living relationships of men and women struggling to achieve peace and fulfillment with each other within the colossal compass of the ranged arch of the visible universe"(Arnold Kettle; *An Introduction of the English Novel 2*,isp 101). In each relationship Lawrence's utmost concern is the image of the arch which gets its final revelation as *The Rainbow* is involved. The novel begins with the first generation of the Brangwenmen and women in the March Farm where Brangwen women are dissatisfied with the way of living to satisfy the blood intimacy and the age old conventions of the farm life. Lawrence wrote "the women were different. On them too was the drowse of blood intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together The women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm life, to the spoken world beyond" (*The Rainbow* p.4).For them the duties of motherhood turn into a powerful victory over their male counterparts. However contrary to them men are portrayed as primitive, conventional and spontaneous in their outlook towards the society and sensibility. They lead a traditional family life by following the values of bloodintimacy. That's why their personal, social as well as sexual life with their wives is inherently physical. There isn't any self satisfactory infatuation among them. The first generation of Brangwen family is centered on the lives of Tom Brangwen and his polish wife Lydia Lensky. As a descendant of Brangwen family Tom is naturally close to the environment of March Farm , but his romantic instincts and sensitivity placed him as a different individual unlike his ancestors. Lawrence describes Tom as an incarnation of his ambitious mother who motivates him in his aspiration to look beyond the four walls of March Farm . Tom is alert of his intrinsic detachment with others and therefore he dislikes his schoolmates "for their mechanical stupidity"(*The Rainbow* p 16). Tom's impulsive nature is seen in his immediate and fertile communication with

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others including women. From this vantage point, a foreign relationship with Lydia and the unification of both body and soul initiates a radical shift in his ideologies. Tom like Hamlet suffers the dilemma of “*To be or not to be*”. For him “to be” is entering into a relationship with a woman who embraces his whole being, without her existence he is nothing as Lawrence writes “.....he was a man and could stand aloneYet admits at the same time, without her he was nothingBut with her, he would be real”(*The Rainbow*35) . His ideology makes him different from his predecessors and he is aware of the idea that the women of the March Farm are unable to satisfy his endeavors. Therefore his encounter with the polish widow Lydia Lensky on the roadside. Lydia works as a housekeeper of the vicar of the farm’s local church. Her “black bonnet” and “long black dress” (*The Rainbow*95) indicates her foreignness. Lydia’s presence in his life becomes an optimistic corridor for “a new universe” (*The Rainbow*95)and a different lifestyle beyond the rotting walls of March Farm. “He imagined that she would be his wings of Icarus, assisting his flight from the Labyrinth of the March Farm to celebrate a maximum self-consummation and fulfillment”.(Sadeq 797). Lydia’s age, her previous marriage, her deceased husband’s memory and her parental responsibility towards her four year old daughter Anna cause hindrances in accomplishing a blissful conjugal life. Lydia is constantly recollecting the eternal moment spent with her departed husband who was succeeded in arousing her femininity and whose absence left her sterile. Besides Lydia’s pregnancy makes their relationship worse. On the one hand Tom starts to think that having a child may divert her attention from him and he will not able to have her wholly. On the other hand Lydia is celebrating her motherhood which placed her in a superior position. With the advancing time for her delivery she becomes more egoistical, free, disconnected and unconscious of Tom. Lydia discovers that Tom is imprisoned within the frontiers of March Farm. His utopian outlook forbids him to come out of the antediluvian environment. Tom is aware of the fulfillment of his manly desire but he forgets Lydia’s womanly need for the completion without transgressing her womanhood. Lydia expects that Tom will embrace her wholeness and glorify her subservience. Their search for self satisfaction and self endorsement make their relationship falling apart. Extreme bitterness within their relationship causes inner exile with each other and a sense of barrenness existed among them. Tom’s failure in the married life turns him

into an alcoholic and soon he attached to little Anna for consolation.

The later part of the novel focuses on the relationships between Anna Lensky and William Brangwen and William’s daughter Ursula and polish aristocrat Anton Skrebensky. Anna Lensky though lived with Tom and Lydia yet she didn’t become the victim of the decaying decadent March Farm. She never lost her identity as a polish origin after living in an alien environment. Like her mother Lydia she is also fierce, hubristic and obstinate and “*hated people who came too near to her*” (*The Rainbow*79). Anna believes that “*they were not her equals*” (*The Rainbow*, 86). Since her childhood she wants to be like the royal “*Alexandra, the princess of Wales*”. Anna’s fascination to live like a magnificent and proud lady, free from all the constraints of March Farm makes her more independent. Anna desires a man who will give her dreams wings to fly and take her away from this numbing universe. She doesn’t want a man like her step father. Anna’s acquaintance with William Brangwen in the March Farm when he came to visit his uncle Tom proves as a new dawn in her life. For Anna, he is like a guardian angel who will take her in his lap in the path of self resurrection. William’s polished behavior, his affection towards music, church architecture and recitation of “*gothic and renaissance perpendicular*” (“*The Rainbow*100) give fuel to her fiery dreams. Anna is falling for his euphonious voice and mystic nature. The warmth of their love leads to the sacred marriage union. They passionately fall for each other and draw apart from their “*elders, to create a new thing by themselvesshe began to act independently of her parents they like to be alone together near to each other but there was still a distance between them*”(*The Rainbow* p101, 103). Soon after their marriage Anna starts to feel the male patriarch in her redeemer who is constantly tries to exploit her freedom and subjugate her proud soul by minimizing her essentialities. His blind obsession with spirituality, church architecture, abstractions indicate his mundane, humdrum existence. He lost his strength to connect with her inner being. William’s chauvinistic desire creates obstacles in her pursuit of self recognition. Like Tom William is not happy with the news of Anna’s pregnancy because he wants her whole being for himself. Anna doesn’t look at her pregnancy as an absolute surrender over her social role and duties as a mother. She feels more confident, superior, triumphant because now William is not able to do whatever he wants to do. The fetus is an evidence of this

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reincarnation . William’s spirit trapped in “a black torment ...” (*The Rainbow*161). William remained unsatisfied and unfulfilled. William found a new shelter and fulfillment with his daughter Ursula like Tom. Ursula’s love gives him little comfort in his isolated life.

The concluding part of the novel focuses on the third generation of Brangwen daughter Ursula and her love relationship with a male of foreign heritage Anton Skrebensky. They belong to the modern age and are deeply influenced by its values, standards and cultural phenomenon. Ursula is an independent and liberated woman who has command over her own life, sexuality. She will never compromise in her partial fulfillment with the male counterpart. She is like a wild animal that is free, unbeatable and revolutionary. Ursula never follows law. She is not bounded by the patriarchal rules and regulations. William Brangwen knew his daughter’s cognizance of her “self” since her childhood. Ursula prefers man resembles her father and who is equal to her. Lawrence writes in the novel “*She wanted to be with her equals: but not by diminishing herself*” (*The Rainbow*233). Like her father Ursula is sensuous and advocates supremacy of sensuality in human experiences “*He was the sensual male seeking pleasure, she was the female ready to take hers...*” (p208). Ursula comes across Polish exile, Baron Anton Skebensky in her uncle’s abode which makes separation with her father for the first time. She intuitively wants to involve into a fleshly consummation with him without allowing him to offend her greater self. Anton Skebensky was a physically attractive engineer, a rigid soldier and at the same time a typical sensual person who believes that he has nothing to give his female partner but a pure physical satisfaction (David Daiches, 1970, p.84). Skebensky is a romantic man who is reading *Wuthering Heights* to Ursula and they spent an evening at the March Farm. Like Heathcliff and Catherine in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*(1947) both of them love each other profoundly. Each time he enlightens her by giving the knowledge of the outer world. The passionate outburst of their love and excitement enables Ursula to acknowledge her greater self and she realizes the triumph of her femininity over her male counterpart. Skebensky thinks “*she tempted him and challenged him and he accepted the challenge, something went fixed in himmad desire , with pain whose only issue was through possession of her body*”(p267). Both of them started to kiss each other by asserting their will over each other. The symbolic act of kissing blurred their

sensuousness with the reality “under it all was ...a magnificent self assertion of the part of both of them(p267). They assert their superiority over each other. The grandeur of their relationship inverted into a continuous struggle for domination and the devouring flame of carnal love is restored by a state of barrenness. Though Ursula feels an agony of helplessness by overthrowing him from her life yet she is obstinate in her quest for “the cold liberty to be herself, to do entirely as she liked” (p282).

The Rainbow (1915) is firmly embedded in reality. It is a revelation of the nature of personal relationships in twentieth century England of incomparable power and insight. Lawrence’s vision of bourgeois society is so potent, so devastating in its uncompromising horror that it was inevitable that the book should outrage the upholders of law and order. In October 1915 *The Rainbow* was declared obscene and the magistrates ordered the recall and destruction of copies (Kettle; *An Introduction to the English Novel 2*, p112). In the novel the relationship between the first generation of Brangwen man and woman is less complicated than the third generation. The relationship between Tom and Lydia is a pre capitalist relationship between a successful working farmer and the daughter of a feudal landowner and therefore its fulfillment is bound up with a sense of oneness with nature and a simple social set up of a developing society. The world faced by the later generations of Brangwen men and women isn’t similar to the idealized March Farm of the first generation of Brangwen man and woman. Ursula like Lawrence knew the reality of the bourgeois world of the twentieth century. In search for freedom Ursula faces facts which neither Lydia nor Anna has had to face. Lawrence’s characters need relationship to be fulfilled yet they are sometimes so intent on their own fulfillment that they find it hard to sustain. The cornerstone of Lawrence’s world is the individual self not human relationship. Lawrence’s individualism is a reaction against industrial capitalist society but it is also a reflection of it. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious* Lawrence argues that “I know that I am I in distinction from the whole world and coming to relate it to others is a secondary matter. Otherness is a necessity for the self but also a source of rage and resentment as it is with Tom Brangwen when confronted with the enigmatic Lydia or Will with the infuriatingly independent Anna(Eagleton; *The English Novel Introduction*, p 265). Otherness is precious as well as troublesome.

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