TENTATIVE CHAPTER PLAN

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TREATMENT OF NATURE IN THE NOVELS OF D.H. LAWRENCE

The Purpose of Study:

In the novels of D.H. Lawrence, nature, broadly speaking had 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 materialistic’s of the scientist mode of observing nature. Whereas the Lawrencean 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. As a matter of fact, the darkness of nature persists and will always keep on persisting, but the materialist chooses to avoid it willfully by living away from nature. He exclusively works under the possessive instinct, On the contrary, the Lawrencean protagonist makes an energetic and intuitive attempt to penetrate into the being of natural objects to show what they are in themselves. The reader of the novels of Lawrence witnesses a recurring and revealing conflict between the mystical view of nature and the materialistic, scientific approach to nature. In the later chapters of this work,
this conflict has been underlined, examined and placed in the right perspective. There is the element of the dark, unknown, mysterious in and about nature. A typically Lawrencian nature description underlines, emphasizes and even re-emphasizes this element not to the exclusion of the Luminous element, tension. Instinctive and intuitional as were the responses and reactions of Lawrence as a creative artist, he felt the presence of unknown modes of feeling and being in the midst of nature with the help of imagination. Nature in Lawrence is an inexhaustible source of energy and vitality. Vitality responds to vitality and discovers vitality all around in nature. This is what exactly happens in the case of Lawrence’s visualization of nature. Vitality as Lawrence would like to have it, is instinctive and intuitive. As instincts and intuitions of the novelist and untamed, spontaneous and untainted with modern materialism, he finds nature, dark nature as a perennial and endness treasure of vitality and vigour. Vitality is inseparable from fluidity. Relevantly and characteristically enough, Lawrence seldom renders nature static, immobile and rigid; he always discovers it to be flowing, changing, trembling and quivering.

Lawrence is known for his graphic and fine descriptions of nature. By temperament, he was a painter who could paint pictures with the help of words. Lawrence’s love for nature descriptions can be explained at two
levels. Firstly he had tried his hand at painting and succeeded considerably in producing life-like pictures. This hobby of Lawrence finds frequent references in his autobiographical novel ‘Sons and Lovers’ where Paul Morel is found keenly absorbed in painting. When his mother asked him what he would like to be, he expressed his desire to be a painter. That was perhaps the nearest to his heart. He observes nature from close quarters and almost identifies himself with it. His close proximity and in fact, total identification with nature enables him to give vivid and wonderful descriptions of nature. His eye falls on every object of nature and so we find graphic portrayal of even small objects, which escape the notice of ordinary persons. Flowers are the favorites of Lawrence. His descriptions of flowers are significant in two ways. Firstly they present the whole scene before the readers in all its charm and vividness. Secondly Lawrence describes the flowers as separate, individual entities. Here is a brief illustration from ‘Women in Love’. The descriptions of Lawrence are not photographic. In fact, he is neither a photographic nor a historical recorder. He half creates the landscape he writes about. He chooses to belong to a place on his own terms, he makes the place his own. Perhaps he had developed a kind of hatred for the real Eastwood. High and imposing mountains and tall rocks, through their awe-inspiring appearance, have always appealed to lovers of
nature. However, Lawrence looks at nature from an altogether different angle and rejects or ignores the static aspects of nature. In fact, Lawrence finds the world in a dynamic state.

D.H. Lawrence approaches nature, inclusive of man, with a mystic’s sense of awe, wonder the adoration. The mystery of nature is indefinable, open, creative, vital and eternal. The mystery with which nature is replete, is a non-human mystery in the sense that it has its own great purposes, manifestations and revelations which are beyond the meagre and scanty comprehension of man, dwarfed and diminished as he is in his power of the mind. God can do without man. He is in a position to replace him with a superman, a much more evolved created being. ‘Human or inhuman mattered nothing’. The mystery of nature is beyond the human and the inhuman. As a matter of fact, the distinction between ‘animate’ and inanimate’ is man’s invention. Nature refuses to recognise this division. By itself, it is one organic, indivisible whole. Lawrence is haunted by and obsessed with the mystery of the inexhaustible that nature is. In his own words: ‘if you tell me about the lotus, tell me of nothing changeless or external. Tell me of the mastery of the inexhaustible, forever unfolding creative spark. Tell me of the incarnate disclosure of the flux, mutation is blossom, laughter and decay perfectly open in their transit, nude in their
movement before us’. Lawrence approaches and describes nature as if he were one living continuum with all the universe’, as if he were at one with nature. He views and watches nature as ‘the real individual’.

Lawrence has expressed his views on symblism, which are found scattered in his letters, his essay ‘The Dragon of Apocalypse’, and his book ‘Fantasia of the unconscious’. He held the view that basically a symbol was emotive hi nature and nonrational in origin. Symbols are a very effective tool in the hands of a great artist like Lawrence. They form an integral part of his nature descriptions and are woven in their texture. Lawrence maintains that symbols stand for emotional experience and have nothing to do with any kind of mental origin. It is obvious that a symbol derives its life and strength from emotional experience. Since symbols are without any fixed meaning, it is not possible to explain them rationally. Lawrence does not belong to any literary movement. Also he is not a follower of any writer. He is original in his approach and his symbols are, therefore, personal. He believes that all art is symbolic, consciously or unconsciously. Lawrence attempts to probe the unconscious is man which he comprehended only with the help of symbols. Lawrence’s range of symbols is quite vast and includes all the major objects of nature, the Biblical personages and episodes in natural background and finally wild animals and birds. What is remarkable
about Lawrence is that he handles this wide field of symbolism with a rare degree of perfection.

The world of nature is not a world of pure joy, innocence and simplicity. It is a world of stark reality where incidents of violence and brutality figure from time to time. In his novels, Lawrence gives us glimpses of the struggle for survival which goes on in this world. The incidents of violence are a part of this world. The incidents of violence are a part of this struggle. Whenever there is a scuffle between man and other creatures, it is always man who comes out victorious in this uneven thussle. The weaker creatures who happen to be at the mercy of man, are naturally the victimised. In ‘The white Peacock’, a cat is caught in a trap by both fore-feet. Being a farmer, George is directly affected by the grim struggle in the midst of nature. He does not seem to have any feeling of mercy. Killing of creatures appears to be a normal practice with him. Nothing troubles him. The struggle for existence continuous unabated in this strife-torn universe, very often causing unnecessary violence. In The White Peacock, we see how one creature overpowers another. The sheep fall a victim to the fierce dogs: Temperamentally, Lawrence was against all violence and brutality in the world of nature. He was very much attached to birds and beasts. In fact, he could not kill any living being and least of all a bird. So hunting did not
appeal to him at all, especially as practices in Italy. In ‘Man is a Hunter’, he satirizes mildly the idiotic doings of the Nimrods of Italy. Whenever he heard the cry of rabbit tracked by a weasel, he would shiver in pain. Lawrence identifies himself with birds and beasts.

Among the primary forces and dogmas, which mar the energy, the vitality of nature, Christianity is one of them. Lawrence discovers that the cathedrals which symbolise the dead and the dogmatic Christianity do not include nature: He listened to the thrushes in the gardens and heard a not which the cathedrals did not include: something free and careless and joyous. He crossed a field that was all yellow with dandelions, on his way to work, and the bath of yellow glowing was something at once so symptoms and so fresh, that he was glad he was way from his shadowy cathedral. As a matter of fact, Lawrence finds that the Church has outlived its utility and powers of moving and stirring. It has creases to be the source of energy and vitality that it used to be. Of Course, as a symbol, it may live on. In fact, the organized and dogmatic religion that Christianity has come to be, has ceased to be alive and pulsating, cut off as it has been from the very springs of life. The Church is somehow tainted; it is not ‘in touch with the vivid life of the Cosmos.’ In Lawrence’s view, Christian dogma is wonderless and productive of boredom, an endless boredom. On the other hand, nature is
permeated with a sense of wonder, which is fundamental to life. Wonder has been named as our sixth sense, natural religious sense.

Lawrence’s view of nature is basically ‘Vendantic’ and seems to have been influenced by the novelist’s study of Indian scriptures and philosophy through such American writers as Emerson, Edward Carpenter and Walt Whitman. ‘Vedanta’ has it, ‘to know is to be’. Lawrence does not taint the air with human preconceptions or pathetic fallacies. He looks at nature for nature’s sake. His approach is determined and permitted by his distinctive vision of life. He treats life as a perpetual conflict between a pair of opposites, say, between blood consciousness and mind consciousness, between the sun, the warm knowledge of the flesh and the moon, the cold light of abstract knowledge. ‘And there is no rest, no cessation from the conflict. Nature, in the novels of Lawrence is the symbol of the inexhaustible vitality, energy and mobility without which he or she cannot improve, revitalise and rejuvenate his or her half-deadened and sterile existence. In fact, it is the principle of timelessness, beckoning the time — bound and space — limited existence of the modern man to come to it for shattering man-made intellectual fancies and systems and renewing the very springs of life. Symbolically it is the struggle, the clash between the two well-known polarities of life which has an immense potentiality of
symbolical meaning. For example, the flesh and the spirit individually in
themselves have not much of the meaning unless and until they interact.
Interaction alone in symbolical. Nature conveys to man, to be natural; to be
natural is to be fearless, spontaneous, free and open. Lawrence prizes nature
for flow of life. Essentially nature in Lawrence appears as the objective
correlative of the dark unconscious within manor in other words, it may be
taken as the symbol of sex, the life of the flesh which is as much dark,
mysterious, vital as the novelist’s nature is.
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