Aaron’s Rod and Kangaroo: Variants on the Kundalini Shakti

Aaron’s Rod and Kangaroo mark another milestone in Lawrence’s career, as they introduce new dimensions to his phallic consciousness. While in Aaron’s Rod the novelist goes on to interpret phallic power as a creative energy of asexual nature, in Kangaroo he defines it as the subterranean power associated with the dark gods who are associated with the gods of sex. Furthermore, in Kangaroo this energy is directed to the fulfillment of the political and social aims. All this makes a very interesting reading. Lawrence has come a long way to develop his phallic consciousness from the conception of sex as a physical pleasure to the conception of sex as a multidimensional cosmic energy. He employs every resource at his command to trace the course of this asexual energy.

As discussed earlier, Lawrence conceives of the phallic power in terms of the Indian Kundalini Shakti, the principle of creation and the instrument of release, at one and the same time. As a principle of creation it is, in terms of philosophy, Nature, with all her generative, active, and passive productive power, and as such the efficient and the material cause of the universe. The earth is simply one of its manifestations. It is the female principle of which the
sky is the male principle. Psychically, earth and sky dualism surfaces as the male and the female principles which define the human personality. In the language of Shankya philosophy earth and sky or for that matter earth and heaven assume the form of Prakrti and Purusha. In Shaivism the two appear as Shiva and Shakti, while in Vaishnavism they appear as Laxmi or Maya and Vishnu as well as Gopi and Krishna. Most probably the best formation of this polarity appears in Ardhanarishvar which is central to Shaivism. Ardhanarishvar, as discussed earlier, has an androgynous character, as it is a combination of both the male and the female principles.

Lawrence was so enamoured of the idea of Ardhanarishvar that he used it in many of his novels. His interest in this idea can be traced from his own psyche which was a conglomeration of the male and the female elements. H.M. Daleski points out the female components of his mental make-up and the problems created by the conflicting demands of these elements. To quote him:

I believe that Lawrence initially made a strenuous effort to reconcile the male and female elements in himself, but that he was more strongly feminine than masculine and that he was unable to effect such a reconciliation. I suggest, therefore, that his insistence in the Fantasia on an absolute degree of masculinity is evidence of an extreme reaction, a refusal even to acknowledge the existence of feminine components in his make-up.

Sons and Lovers is a profound study of the problems created by these conflicting elements. In this novel Lawrence seeks a way out of the psychical obsessions through sexual release. In The Rainbow Lawrence concentrates on phallic energy or the Kundalini Shakti as an instrument of release and salvation. His argument is that through centralized sexuality and spontaneous
love man can achieve a union defined as conjunction, and through it gets fulfilment just here and now. The idea of union, which he moots, can be defined as togetherness in separateness. It is in this type of conjunction that man can achieve a sense of pleasure beyond the experience of transfiguration, or in one word, the realization of God. In this novel the central metaphor is that of rainbow which, in India, is associated with the God of Kama.

Women in Love, a sequel to The Rainbow, interprets phallic power as a sleeping power lying coiled at the end of the backbone. It is remarkable that Lawrence uses precisely the same phrases and symbols which are used to describe Kundalini Shakti in Indian philosophy and religion. In the novel he conceives of phallic power as something deeper than the mere sexual power. For him it is the source of the floods of ineffable darkness and ineffable riches that one feels in one’s body. The experience of this pleasure or power is indescribable. Lawrence equates sex experience with the divine experience in which the subject and the object, or for that matter the male and the female, become one. Lawrence also tries to establish that during these moments the male achieves pure maleness and, the female the femaleness, creating a condition of perfect male and female union, reminding us the union of Prakrti and Purusha in Indian philosophy and religion.

In Aaron’s Rod Lawrence goes beyond the conception of phallic power as asexual, liberating, and uniting power. Now he interprets it as an asexual cosmic power operating on every level, as a power which is as much the instrument of pleasure, recognition, and release as an embodiment of creative
energy and the harbinger of a new life. In no other novel the phallic consciousness assumes such an inclusive and elaborate multidimensional character as in Aaron's Rod. Likewise, no other symbol of phallic power, whether the Lingam or phallus, the rainbow, and so on and so forth, are so versatile as is the symbol of rod or flute which is at once the symbol of sex, creativity, and power. Furthermore, Aaron's Rod has another defining element. It goes on to develop the theme of man to man relationship—a theme introduced in Women in Love as an integral factor in the fulfillment of human life. Much in the same way it also presents a new version of the concept of Ardhanarishvar.

To begin with, Aaron's Rod is predominantly a phallic novel, revolving round the central metaphor of flute which, in the words of H.M. Daleski, "has become an emblem of phallic potency." Initially, Lawrence conceives of Aaron's rod as simply a phallic head because in his view the erection of phallus denoted power. However, this power cannot be constructive but only destructive, since it annihilates both the male and the female elements. He describes this power in Aaron's Rod, as the blood-sucking power: "The lust and loveliness of his flesh, his godlike phallic power in the flesh. And the inevitable consummation, the drinking of his innermost drop of heart's blood. Lust and temptation — And then carrion." However, this idea of Aaron as the phallic Godhead was not accepted by his publishers Seltzer and Secker and hence they made necessary cuts to eliminate the idea. Nevertheless, the idea of phallus God continued to persist.
As mentioned earlier, rod, or flute for that matter, is a multiple symbol, which as Graham Hough observes, goes on to assume "greater and greater importance, both material and symbolical." It goes on to take many forms, becoming at once "his means of livelihood," "the very instrument of liberation," the symbol of his "charm" i.e. "personal vital force," and also of release. Much in the same way it also becomes the symbol of a "new life of adventure" or in other words, the creative life. To quote him:

During this latter half of the book Aaron’s flute has been assuming greater and greater importance, both material and symbolical. It is in the first place his means of livelihood. It is by his talents as a performer that Aaron earns his living and is free to wander around Italy, so that the flute is not only the symbol but the very instrument of his liberation. It was Lilly who pointed out its possibilities to him, told him that he could live by it – at worst he could put on a big black hat and play outside the cafés. It was Lilly who had called the flute Aaron’s rod, and associated it with what he called his charm – that is to say, with Aaron’s personal vital force. And sure enough, it was the flute that had enabled him to live, it was the flute that had gained him the interest and sympathy of the people he had met on his travels, it was the flute that had released the frost-bound Marchesa. So far it had led him progressively forward on his new life of adventure. But can it continue to do so, and where is it leading him?4

In the beginning, we find that the rod or the flute is only an instrument of art or music that enables Aaron to experience the ecstasy of the aesthetic pleasure. At the same time it also serves as a means of liberation from the pressures or tensions caused by the demanding nature of his wife and children. We can recall how Aaron engages himself in the exercise of solitary flute-playing in the back kitchen: "The pure, mindless, exquisite motion and fluidity of the music delighted him with a strange exasperation."5 It is this music
which transports him in an extraordinary state which is free from domestic tensions. It is no wonder that when his daughter Millicent intrudes on and presses him to buy some Christmas tree candles, he resists her and goes on with his flute-playing business. "The music," writes John Worthen, "is 'measured and insistent' and prevents her 'from saying what was on her own mind' — which makes her 'pale with anger'. Then — to his wife's annoyance — Aaron dresses to go out."

As for the flute being the means of his livelihood, we find that Aaron is such "an accomplished flute-player" who can earn his living with the help of the instrument. Naturally Lilly, his friend, makes him "see his flute ('Aaron's Rod') as a symbol of his creative life and as the means by which he can live freely and independently." Apart from being the means of his livelihood, the flute for Aaron is a symbol of his personal vital force which confirms his identity as an artist. It also gives him social recognition, as it aroused interest and sympathy in the hearts of people giving him name and fame. Flute is not only the instrument of self-release or self-fulfillment but it also a means of transformation. The effect of this transforming power of the flute is exemplified through the career of Marchese, a singer who is not able to sing. Aaron meets this American woman, married to an Italian Marchese in Florence, he finds her suffering "from inhibition that has deprived her of her singing voice." However, when she comes in touch with Aaron, her inhibition melts into thin air and she becomes a transformed person. "Aaron's flute-
"playing," writes Hough, "releases her, and she is able to sing again to his accompaniment."\(^{10}\)

But more than anything else, Aaron's rod is a symbol of his creative life which can be defined as a new life of adventure. When in a terrorist attack Aaron's flute is smashed, he feels shattered. For it is not the rod that destroyed but it is the budding symbol of new life that is destroyed. To quote him:

>'Throw it in the river, Aaron,' said Lilly, 'It's an end.'
Aaron nervelessly dropped the flute into the stream... He was quite dumbfounded by the night's event: the loss of his flute. Here was a blow he had not expected. And the loss was for him symbolistic. It chimed with something in his soul: the bomb, the smashed flute, the end.\(^{11}\)

After the flute is broken Aaron finds himself in a state of uncertainty. He does not know what he should do. Nevertheless, he feels that for the time being the creative force of his life has lapsed. Since nothing can be done to recover it, he has to endure this lapse. Describing the state of his mind Hough writes:

>When Aaron asks what he is to do now, Lilly replies dryly that he will have to live without a rod in the meantime. There are times when the creative, progressive force of life lapses. Then there is nothing to do but to endure.\(^{12}\)

However, more than anything else, the flute is a symbol of divine energy which flows in the form of a divine music. This music is not merely scintillating but also divine in its purport, since it transports everyone into another world removing every obstacle or obsession that comes in the way. We have mentioned earlier that the music of Aaron's flute has a softening effect on the mind of his daughter Millicent so much so that she cannot say
what she wanted to say to her father. The music flowing from her father’s flute renders her dumb. Likewise, Aaron’s flute has such a tremendous impact on Marchese’s mind as she regains her singing voice which she had lost due to some mental inhibition. Indeed, music transports but the music of Aaron’s rod not merely transports but liberates, releasing a flood of divine energy. Here we can liken the flute of Aaron with the flute of Lord Krishna. Krishna’s flute is also a multiple symbol, as it produces a music of magical sound which animates even the inanimate and energizes all living beings. So haunting are its notes that one cannot resist its captivating charm. This observation can be confirmed by the following passage:

O Murari, pray spare me the melody of Your magic flute at least for the time I am busy in the kitchen, for as soon as those dulcet notes enter the kitchen, the dry pieces of wood that I use as fuel become wet and begin to drip with water, so that the fire is extinguished and I am undone.\(^13\)

We can quote some more lines to underscore the captivating and transporting qualities of Krishna’s flute:

Do you hear it, friend, haste back home, (else) you will be pierced by the darts from His eyes. This flute, says Niwaja, is full of poison and injects poison into the heart;
O innocent lady, you forget yourself hearing the sweet music, If you want to save the family honour, put finger into both your ears.\(^14\)

Even a casual comparison of Aaron’s rod with Krishna’s flute demonstrates a close affinity between the two. In a way Aaron’s flute is a
Western prototype of Krishna’s flute. The energy which flows through it can be understood only in terms of divine energy defined as Kundalini Shakti. Even though there are certain differences between the two flutes, the fact of their resemblance can hardly be missed.

Along with the symbolism of flute there is yet another notion which Lawrence develops in an Indian style. This notion can be identified as a new conception of man to man relationship which finds expression in his novels. Lawrence’s idea of man to man relationship is manifestly the combination of two Indian notions, Ardhanarishvar and the friendly relationship like the one we find between Krishna and Arjuna. He projected man to man relationship chiefly through Birkin and Gerald, Aaron and Lilly, and Somers and Kangaroo. However in Aaron’s Rod while, delineating the relationship between Aaron and Lilly, he gives a new twist to this idea. In the notion of Ardhanarishvar the male and the female elements are shown to exist in one and the same physical frame, proving that human body is neither exclusively male nor exclusively female but androgynous in character. This best specimen of this form is Lord Shiva. Explaining the Ardhanarishvar form of Shiva, Chandra Rajan writes: “Formless, Eternal, One, Siva is pure consciousness, the changeless reality behind the manifold, changing world that is brought into being by his inherent power of sakti – cosmic energy. Kali is one of the many names of Sakti; the names descriptive of the creative power are the feminine forms of the words pertaining to the many aspects and functions of the unitive godhead: Sivani, Bhavani, Kali, Mahakali derived from Siva, Bhava, Kala and Mahakala define
the feminine, creative aspects of the One. In iconography this concept is imaged as ardhanarisvara – the Lord whose one half is woman. Siva and Sakti are therefore one indivisible Whole.\textsuperscript{15}

In a way Lawrence is the negative prototype of Ardhanarishvara. As mentioned earlier, he embodied in himself the male and the female elements. He is the negative model of Shiva in the sense that his character does not express the integrated nature of the two elements. He is an embodiment of duality rather individuality. Nevertheless, he presents the notions of Ardhanarishvara in another way. In his novels Lawrence frequently splits himself into two and creates two characters, one incorporating his male qualities and the other his female qualities. In Aaron’s Rod both Aaron and Lilly stand for Lawrence’s ownself. Dealing with this problem, F.R. Leavis gives a detailed analysis of the elements which Aaron and Lilly inherit from their creator. For our purpose it is sufficient to refer to only the important ones. Leavis points out that Aaron, though a charming personality, does not share Lawrence’s “transcendent social gifts.”\textsuperscript{16} Eventually he is not as close to Lawrence as Lilly. To quote Leavis:

Lawrence himself was a genius of transcendent social gifts and irresistible personal fascination. Aaron, it is true, has had his three years’ training as a teacher, but, apart from his flute-playing, he is not represented as having any very striking gifts or social qualifications, and though we are told that he has charm, we hardly feel this when he is really present to us as the distinctive blond ex-check-weighman, Aaron Sisson. Not that, as we follow the story, we question the operation of the charm; his career has an irresistible actuality, and the things that are presented as happening happen, unquestionably, just so. But reflecting critically, we realize that, in our unanalysed sense of
him, Aaron has not been as wholly distinct from Lawrence as the dramatic opposition of the ex-checkweighman flautist to the Laurentian Lilly affirms; he has had, in an equivocal way, the benefit of Lawrence's own genius, and has been, in his career, carried through the novel with an unquestioned ease on that. Thus, when at Sir William Franks' mansion at Novara he talks with Sir William or Lady Franks, he is indisputably the phlegmatic well-built flautist and not Lawrence.\(^\text{17}\)

On the contrary Leavis finds the key elements of Lawrence's personality in Lilly who eventually becomes the spokesman of his philosophy of power. Through of Lilly, Lawrence not only expresses his power-philosophy but also voices his personal problems which consume much of his attention. These problems so acute that they surface even in the *Kangaroo*, written just a year after *Aaron's Rod*. Evidently both Lawrence and Lilly followed a similar philosophy of life. "We have evidence enough," writes Leavis, "that at this time not only was Lilly's kind of preoccupation with 'power', 'responsibility' and 'submission', and with extra-literary implications of such genius as Lawrence's, very much Lawrence's own, but that the preoccupation as it absorbed Lawrence was at the same time a wrestling with the problem of his own most important personal relation – his relation with Frieda."\(^\text{18}\)

Anyhow, in spite of Leavis's ingenious argument, it is difficult to subscribe to his views. In fact, neither Aaron nor Lilly is a complete representative of Lawrence's personality. Indeed, they share his preoccupations, likes and dislikes, mind and art, but only partially. Since both of them represent some or the other conspicuous quality of their creator's
character, they are like two brothers bound together by the mutual sympathy as well as hostility. Lawrence himself acknowledges this peculiar relationship:

The two men had an almost uncanny understanding of one another – like brothers. They came from the same district, from the same class. Each might have been born into the other's circumstances. Like brothers, there was a profound hostility between them. But hostility is not antipathy.

(Aaron's Rod X).

Most probably in connection with the relationship of Aaron and Lilly with their creator, the views of Hough are more relevant. According to him Lawrence splits himself in two characters Aaron and Lilly and through them represents two aspects of his own personality, the prophetic and the escapist. While Lilly shares his prophetic voice, Aaron becomes the representative of the escaped denizen of Eastwood. To quote him:

The fact is that Lawrence has split his own consciousness between two characters in the story – Aaron and Lilly. Lilly is Lawrence the prophet, and Aaron is the escaped denizen of Eastwood. Here Lawrence the prophet, thinly disguised as Lilly, is seen preaching to the unregenerate English upper classes; but it is not until he is brought into relation with Aaron that the book regains imaginative integrity and again picks up its main threat.¹⁹

In this way Lawrence gives an interesting twist to the Indian concept of Ardhanarishvar by externalizing the male and the female elements in his psychic framework in the form of the protagonists of Aaron’s Rod, Aaron and Lilly. Even if this sort of framework only coincidental, we cannot deny the fact that the source of this idea can be only the Indian concept of human personality which enjoins a perfect combination of the male and the female elements in the human body.
Lawrence’s twist also enables him to reinforce his notion of asexual relationship between man and man. As pointed out earlier, he engages himself in a quest for man to man relationship as a complement to man to woman relationship. He makes persistent efforts to discover ways and means to project love in its holistic form i.e. as an all exclusive oceanic love in which streams of the various forms of love merge. The models of the man and woman love can be found in almost every tradition. However, there are hardly an instance of a perfect man to man love. Even if there is an instance, it is fraught with the evil of homosexuality. It is only in Indian tradition that we have models of such relationship. In this category we can place the relationship that exists between the master and the disciple or between two friends.

Although there are countless examples, the most outstanding being those of Krishna and Arjuna, and Ramkrishan Paramhansh and Vivekanand. In the friendship of Aaron and Lilly, we have glimpses of the friendship of Krishna and Arjuna. Aaron meets Lilly at a critical juncture of his life, when he is utterly confused about himself and his mission of life. He finds himself standing at the crossroad like a perplexed person who has lost his way. But at this time Lilly comes in his life like Lord Krishna, to remove his doubts and confusions and to restore his confidence by telling him that he can live by his flute. Furthermore, when Aaron becomes ill, Lilly tends him like a mother. Even though he knows fully well that Aaron might desert him in the end. Lilly is neither a weakling nor a feminine but a believer like Krishna in the power game. While nursing Aaron, Lilly reflects:
I wonder why I do it ... As soon as this man's really better he'll punch me in the wind, metaphorically if not actually, for having interfered with him. And Tanny would say he was quite right to do it. She says I want power over them. What if I do?... Why can't they submit to a bit of healthy individual authority.

(Aaron's Rod IX)

The theme of man to man relationship in an exclusive Indian style, is extended in Lawrence's next novel Kangaroo. In this novel his affinity with Indian versions of the relationships becomes all the more pronounced. In the Indian way of life, when a disciple comes to his teacher for achieving power, he has to win the confidence of his teacher. He can win this confidence only after surrendering himself before his teacher. This surrender should be so complete that the teacher and the disciple should become one soul in two bodies. Lawrence hints at this sort of surrender in Aaron's Rod. He again looks for it in Kangaroo. In Aaron's Rod Lilly discusses the two ways of life, the way of love and the way of power. Since Aaron believes that the way of love has become by now obsolete, he has to adopt the way of power. The crucial element of the way of power is the surrender to someone superior to oneself. Everybody will have to accept this precondition if a person wants to regain his power. Discussing Lilly's philosophy of power and surrender, Hough writes:

He says that there are two life-modes, love and power. Aaron, like modern Western man in general, has tried to live by the love-mode alone, and he has exhausted its possibilities. Christendom has tried to live by the love-mode, and it has come to the end of it. No further progress is possible in that direction, we have
reached breakdown and failure. If life is to continue, a shift must be made to the power-mode, the fact and the necessity of power must be accepted. A man must find his own power, and to find it he must first learn to submit to superior power when he meets it.20

In Kangaroo the themes of power and surrender are attuned to Indian conceptions of power and surrender to a greater degree. The novel goes on to delineate man and man relationship and its precondition surrender exclusively in Indian terms. Now he defines power in terms of Kundalini Shakti. In an important breakthrough he identifies its source in the dark gods or the denizens of the unconscious realm.

As for as the man to man relationship Lawrence is inclined to define them in terms of Indian tradition of the master-disciple-relationship. He makes a relentless effort to carve out a prototype of the man to man intimacy without homosexual undertones. "He is groping," writes Dr. Hukum Singh, "for a sort of master-disciple, not master-slave-relationship, the sort of relationship that existed between Ramkrishna and Vivekanand, between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, the sort of relationship that exists between a perfect Yogi, a realized soul and his true disciple."21

The man to man relationship, as master and disciple, involves certain misgivings regarding surrender. According to some scholars surrender implies the destruction of one's individuality. However, it is not the whole truth. In this state, as Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the eighteenth chapter of The Gita, one has to keep his identity intact. "It may be recalled," writes Dr. Singh, "that in such a relationship the individuality of the disciple is not destroyed, his self
is not annihilated. 'The Bhagwat Geeta' is perfectly clear about it. While Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna to surrender to Him. He also tells him to remain himself and be rooted in his own Dharma."  

In the systems of practical worship this relationship requires a strict discipline. The disciple has to cultivate power through the exercise of yoga under the guidance of his teacher. During the exercises the attitude of the teacher might become stern and the life of the disciple may be a bit miserable. But he has to endure it, as there is no alternative. According to Dr. Singh, it is this type of relationship that Lawrence is seeking to cultivate in Kangaroo. To quote him: "In the various cults of Sadhana prevalent in India based either on Tantric system or Patanjali's Yoga Sutras or on the systems based on Transmission, the master-disciple relationship is just akin to what Lawrence is groping for. Lawrence admits with perfect sincerity and honestly that Somers, the Lawrence - figure "did not know" the current shape of that 'living relationship' which he carved for."  

Lawrence interprets the theme of surrender in terms of leadership which can be defined as lordship. He considers that this lordship is innate, natural, and secret. Indians, he believes, understand the mystery of this relationship, while the Western world fails to solve this riddle. On the contrary with its insistence on democracy and equality, the Western world tries to deny and obliterate it. To quote Lawrence:

But what? He did not know. Perhaps the thing that the dark races know: that one can still feel in India: the mystery of lordship. That which white men have struggled so long against,
and which is the clue to the life of the Hindu. The mystery of lordship. The mystery of innate, natural, secret priority. The other mystic relationship between men, which democracy and equality try to deny and obliterate. Not any arbitrary caste or birth aristocracy. But the mystic recognition of difference and innate priority, the joy of obedience and the sacred responsibility of authority. 24

The question of surrender entails another question viz. surrender to whom or surrender to what. Lawrence poses this question in order to identify the proper person or agency to whom or which one has to submit. His answer is that surrender is to be made to "the sacredness of power, unequally distributed among men according to the degree in which the dark god dwells in them." 25

Most of the critics do not appreciate Lawrence’s concepts of power and the dark god. They are quick to point out that Lawrence himself is not clear about them. Even Hough finds them vague. "The defence of Lawrence," writes Hough, "is that, indefinite as the concept may be, he is in process of defining it; and as a first step he distinguishes the kind of power he is disposed to worship from the wrong kind of power – mere mass bullying." 26 Hough like many other critics is unable to understand the real meaning of Lawrence’s concept of power and the dark god. He hardly seems aware of the fact that the power to which the novelist refers to is not the ordinary physical or natural power. Nor is it the vertebral power. It is the Kundalini Shakti or the serpent power which is unknown to the Western realm of thought. Lawrence refers to this power in a number of ways. In the chapter entitled "The Battle of Tongues" he mentions the phallic god as the carrier of this power. This phallic
god enters into the body through the lower limbs. Although there is no mention of the Kundalini Shakti, the terminology of the passage leaves no body in doubt regarding the purpose of the passage. This terminology is similar to the terminology used in yoga system or Kundalini yoga to describe the movements of the body. We can do no better than to quote the conversation between Somers and Kangaroo:

"Why," he said, "it means an end of us and what we are, in the first place. And then a re-entry into us of the great God, who enters us from below, not from above."

Kangaroo sat bunched up like some creature watching round-eyed out of a darker corner.

"How do you mean, enters us from below?" he barked.

"Not through the spirit. Enters us from the lower self, the dark self, the phallic self, if you like."

"Enters us from the phallic self?" snapped Kangaroo sharply.

"Sacredly. The god you can never see or visualise who stands dark on the threshold of the phallic me."

"The phallic you, my dear young friend, what is that but love?"

Richard shook his head in silence.

"No," he said, in a slow, remote voice. "I know your love Kangaroo. Working everything from the spirit, from the head. You work the lower self as an instrument of the spirit----- Man to depart, and leave us dark, in front of the unspoilable God: who is just beyond the dark threshold of the lower self, my lower self. There is a great God on the threshold of my lower self, whom I fear while he is my glory. And the spirit goes out like a spent candle."

(Kangaroo VII)

This conversation bears an unmistakable stamp of the language of Kundalini Shakti which sleeps in the Muladhara Chakra which is the abode of God Brahma (according to some Ganesh, the son of Shiva, the God of phallus). All the Chakras have their deities. M.P. Pandit, the well known Indian
authority on Chakras, writes: "The Cakras are locii – special centres – of operation of the Tattvas which are the self- formulations of the Sakti; they influence, vitalise and control corresponding regions of the body, and the organs, nerves, plexuses, etc., situated in them. In fact it is these subtle concentrations of Consciousness – Power which develop out of themselves, and keep in being, their gross embodiments taking shape into the physical body." 27

Pandit further adds: "Each of the Cakras has a Deity, a particular form of Consciousness – presiding over it. This form or aspect of Consciousness, the Devata, governs and informs the bodily region around it. And each Deity has its own abode, Loka." 28 The Western scholars are all at sea with Lawrence’s conception of dark god. The dark god which is hailed as an alternative of Kangaroo’s Christian love, appears to them as a god of mere force and cruelty. Sometimes he also comes before us as a god of healing and life-giving power. In this way he is both the god of terror and the god of life. This idea of god as the blending of the opposite elements makes the whole concept much confused. According to Hough: "Lawrence is sometimes so near to nihilism and devil - worship that his repudiation of it takes the form of a wild, horrified revulsion in which all control is lost. But this is better than no revulsion at all. The false dark god is repudiated, the true dark god remains hidden; and we have still to wait for a further revelation of his nature." 29

Hough’s statement is yet another instance of the failures of the Western critics to explain Lawrence’s dark god. If we go by the statement of Lawrence
in Kangaroo, we can easily reach the heart of the matter. The novelist identifies the dark god with the various incarnations of the god of phallus. To quote from the novel:

He is jealous of Thor or Zeus of Bacchus or Venus. The great dark God outside the gate is all these gods. You open the gate, and sometimes in rushes Thor and gives you a bang on the head with a hammer; or Bacchus comes mysteriously through, and your mind goes dark and your knees and thighs begin to glow; or it is Venus, and you close your eyes and open your nostrils to a perfume, like a bull. All the gods. When they come through the gate they are personified. But outside the gate it is one dark God, the Unknown. And the Unknown is a terribly jealous God, and vengeful. A fearfully vengeful god: Moloch, Astarte Ashtaroth, and Baal. That is why we dare not open now. It would be a hell-god, and we know it. We are the second generation. Our children are the third. And our children’s children are the fourth.

(Kangaroo XV)

Most of the gods mentioned in the passage are associated with phallic consciousness. In his book Ancient Symbol Worship, while dealing with phallic consciousness in ancient religion of antiquity, Westropp & Wake provide us with a list of phallic gods including Baal, Mahadev or Bala, Deva Nahusha or Dionysus, Iswara or Oseiris, Mel-Karth, Adonis, and Moloch. Elsewhere they also mention the name of Khem, Vul, San or Shamas, Jupiter et al. As discussed in the first chapter, most of these gods are either the incarnation or the emanation from Mahadev or Shiva, the Supreme God of the phallic consciousness and Chakras. Although all the Chakras have different gods, nevertheless these gods are linked with Lord Shiva in some way or the other. Let us refer to these gods of Chakras as mentioned by M.P. Pandit:
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In this list Rudra, Sadasiva, and Sambhu are only the other names of Lord Shiva. Brahma as the god of Brahmi phallic consciousness is also a phallic god. Much in the same way Vishnu or Isvara are the Vaishnav gods. In the end we can say that there is a close affinity between Lawrence’s notions of power and the dark god and the Indian Kundalini Shakti and the gods of Chakras.

To reiterate, both Aaron’s Rod and Kangaroo are interesting variants on the theme of Kundalini Shakti. In Aaron’s Rod the chief protagonist Aaron is the god of phallus and his rod or flute is the symbol of phallic power. However, the flute does not stand for a single thing. In fact, it is a multiple symbol of aesthetic pleasure, liberation, release, creative life, and more importantly of a new life, the life of power. Another idea which prominently figures in the novel is a new idea of Ardhanarishvar. In Aaron’s Rod Lawrence splits himself in two characters Aaron and Lilly. This new version enables him to externalize not only his own problems but the problems of humanity at large.
In Kangaroo, Lawrence adds new dimensions to his version of Kundalini power and gods associated with it. He starts with the idea of the man to man relationship that he interprets in terms of asexual relationship patterned on the teacher and disciple relationship like the one found in the relationship of Krishna and Arjuna as well as Ramkrishna and Vivekanand. In this kind of relationship, surrender is a precondition. Lawrence approves of this idea of surrender. But he does not moot the idea of surrender to another person of ordinary power. Surrender is to be made, he thinks, to a person who is distinguished for his devotion to the dark god. The Western world is unable to understand Lawrence’s notions of power and the dark god. It is because they do not know its real sources. In fact, Lawrence’s real source is the Indian Kundalini yoga or Shaivism. According to Lawrence the main spring of power is the god residing in the lower self. This lower god is the god of phallus. Lawrence identifies this god with Baal, Moloch, Astarte, and Asthtaroh. These gods of antiquity are invariably related to Mahadev or Shiva who is the supreme god of phallus and who is also the lord of Kundalini Shakti. He, in his various garbs, is also the god of different centres of power called Chakras or plexuses.

In Aaron’s Rod and Kangaroo, Lawrence introduces new dimensions and a new symbolism of Kundalini Shakti. Rod as flute is a symbol of divine music which transforms the world of every day experience. At the same time rod is also the symbol of temporal power, as it is associated with the imperial rod, the representative of the power and majesty of an emperor. The power
which flows through the flute is the divine power that liberates as well as creates. It is the same power which Lawrence presents in Kangaroo as a mysterious power of consciousness presided over by the dark god, the god of phallus. The selfsame power assumes the form of Maha Kundalini Shakti which energizes the vision of The Plumed Serpent.
Chapter 5 – Notes


2 Daleski 198.


5 Qtd. Worthen 68.

6 Worthen 68.

7 Hough 117.

8 Hough 121.

9 Hough 123.

10 Hough 123.

11 D.H. Lawrence, Aaron’s Rod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) Ch. XX: hereafter cited as Aaron’s Rod. All the subsequent excerpts are from this book and are mentioned with chapter numbers.

12 Hough 124.

14 Poddar 37-38,


17 Leavis 38-39.

18 Leavis 44.

19 Hough 118.

20 Hough 124-125.


22 Dr. Singh 119.

23 Dr. Singh 119-120.

24 D.H. Lawrence, Kangaroo (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1960) Ch. VI: hereafter cited as Kangaroo. All the subsequent excerpts are from this book and are mentioned with chapter numbers.

25 Hough 137.

26 Hough 137.


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28Pandit 47.

29Hough 139.


31See Westropp & Wake 24.

32See Westropp & Wake 25.

33See Westropp & Wake 26.

34Pandit 47.