Chapter 3

The Rainbow
and
The Quest of Salvation through Sex
(Sambhog se Samadhi)

The Rainbow marks a decisive turn in Lawrence's phallic consciousness, in as much as, it demonstrates a phallic view which is closely akin to that of India. As discussed in the first chapter, in Sons and Lovers, there is a visible stamp of Indian phallic ideas. But these ideas appear in their negative form, bringing out merely the ill-effects of sex. It has little to do with the wholesome effects which mould human character. Naturally in Sons and Lovers sex is rather problematic, as it questions not only the efficacy of sexual experience but also the institution related to sexual life such as love and marriage. Theoretically, sex is an instrument of release of the power trapped in the centres of energy known as plexuses. But practically in the novel there is no freeflow of this energy even after the sexual act. And even if there is a flow of energy, it does not ensure freedom but produces obsessive feelings that invariably come in its wake. It seems to jeopardize the emotional life.

Nearly all the chief characters in the novel suffer and their sufferings assume tragic dimensions. There are almost no moments of mental and moral elevation and even if there are such moments, these are only occasional and isolated. They do not produce the desired effect. For instance, the flashes of
moral energy in Paul that inspires him to put the life of Clara and Baxter on the right track, belie expectations in as much as the beneficiaries, at least one of them, do not even approve of his action. *Sons and Lovers*, though profound in its physical dimension, does not touch the depth of the soul, the real source of desire which gives meaning and energy to genuine sex consciousness.

In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence delves deep and sounds the bottomless depth of the soul the seat of the phallic consciousness. He speaks of higher things, deeper roots, and higher purposes of sexuality, giving it a new meaning and new dimensions, as he integrates it with the totality of life. He provides it with a new aroma, suffusing it with some sort of religious, spiritual, and mystic light at one and the same time. Sexuality is no longer only the release of energy but a vehicle of the higher states of being and a higher state of individual and social life. Its purpose does not remain confined to the physical aspect but goes on to include the experience of another life or a life beyond, commonly identified with salvation. Here again, in his conception of salvation, he does not follow tradition. As stated earlier, Lawrence is too great a genius to follow the track set by his ancestors. For he has his own ideas, his own terms of reference, his own plans and schemes, and ways to materialize them. In respect of salvation, too, he has a new conception which he gradually unfolds in *The Rainbow*.

Lawrence opens the novel, as Julian Moynahan remarks, by stating two orientations towards life, the first is a mindless union towards creation referred to as “blood-intimacy” and the second is “a capacity for higher form of being.” Whereas the first is shallow like the one, we find in *Sons and Lovers*, the
second is deeper which Lawrence unfolds in The Rainbow, in which he describes the life of blood-intimacy through the generations of Brangwens. As we learn from the novel Brangwens had something especial in them, since they possessed a living presence of the union of heaven and earth around them:

They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth.

However, the women folk of the Brangwens longed for another life which was different in character. They aspired for a life beyond this life, the life of blood-intimacy, of “calves sucking and hens running together in droves, and young geese palpitating in the hand while the food was pushed down their throttle” (The Rainbow 42). One of them, Mrs.Brangwen, wanted to discover what was the beyond or what made the vicar different from her husband. Giving expression to what was passing in her mind, Lawrence writes:

What was it in the vicar, that raised him above the common men as man is raised above the beast? She craved to know. She craved to achieve this higher being, if not in herself, then in her children. That which makes a man strong even if he be little and frail in body, just as any man is little and frail beside a bull, and yet stronger than the bull, what was it? It was not money nor power nor position. What power had the vicar over Tom Brangwen – none. Yet strip them and set them on a desert island, and the vicar was the master. His soul was master of the other man’s. And why –why? She decided it was a question of knowledge.

(The Rainbow 44)

After this long deliberation she concludes that the life of the vicar was conspicuous neither for money nor for class but for education and experience which certainly inculcated a higher state of life. She aspires for this very life for learning that Vicar was living:
It was this, this education, this higher form of being, that the mother wished to give to her children, so that they too could live the supreme life on earth.

(The Rainbow 44)

These two orientations are related to the two distinct selves of man. One of them is the self of ordinary, social, and familiar experience. It deals with daily events and is limited to ordinary goals of life. The other is the self of mysterious transaction. It is associated with the universe as a whole. Its goals are unknown. However, both of them are fragmentary, as they are unable to yield an experience of wholeness or integrative life. But when they are combined, they produce a unitive and holistic experience. Certainly, it is this experience which can be defined as the experience of salvation which Lawrence demonstrates in The Rainbow.

However, to understand Lawrence’s idea of salvation, we have first to understand the development of salvation as a term and as a concept. In the language of common parleys, salvation is deliverance or redemption from the state of bondage or evil. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English interprets the term in two senses. In the first sense, the term is associated with religion: “(in Christianity) the state of being saved from the power of evil.” In the second sense, the term has a secular connotation: “a way of protecting sb[somebody] from danger, disaster, loss, etc.”

Salvation as a Christian idea historically refers to the creed of Israel which envisages salvation as deliverance which is the direct, though not
unmediated operation of God’s will. To quote from The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics:

The salvation which was an experience in Israel originated in the act of God. No doubt, Israel might be saved at any given moment of need by human instrumentality. But the instinct of Israel always passed beyond the human agent to the real doer, who was Jowheh Himself, ‘who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses.’ To prefer the human to the divine Saviour is practical apostasy. The creed of Israel is, in brief, ‘Jahweh saves’; and their creed is not the work of philosophers, the product of speculation, but the immediate deliverance of an experience, too real and too great to be susceptible of any other explanation than this, that it is the direct, though not unmediated, operation of God Himself.³

In Christian tradition, salvation is only deliverance which is completely determined by the Sovereign will of God and which cannot be consummated even on the individual level without redemption of community, environment, and the world at large.

In Egyptian tradition, salvation refers to a state of happiness experienced after death. It is a state in human world enjoyed by the blessed dead. A.M. Blackman states:

The blessed dead, we are told, dwell in heaven as the intimate companions of the sun-god. It is said of him ‘who has reached (the existence yonder) without wrongdoing’ that ‘he shall continue yonder like a god, stepping forward boldly like the Lords of Eternity.’⁴

However, in Indian tradition, the word is used in much wider connotation. It means a release from passions of desire, condition of bodiless existence, and a deliverance from Avidya. Thus it is a value principle regulating the course of life. Literally, its Sanskrit equivalent “moksha” or
"mukti" comes from "muck" which means deliverance or release from pains and penalties of any kind. But later on, the term assumed a specific meaning denoting deliverance from the fetters of the earthly bondage i.e. "deliverance from bondage to the world and its fetters which is the desired and ideal end of the Hindu religious life. Hindu aspiration and longing centre always in mukti, in deliverance in one way or another from the weariness and bondage universally associated with temporal existence."  

In Indian philosophy the individual who achieves liberation from the cramped and fettered condition of earthly experience and enters into a new state of endless freedom and facility enjoying fulness of life. On the whole Hindu religion conceives of salvation "in terms of release from bondage to the present evil world to a further unworliday existence, which is not subject to change or liable to distress and harm."  

Indeed in Indian vision of life, salvation is a deliverance from the bondages psychic, physical, and spiritual. It is a state of happiness and fulfilment and a state beyond this life or a state of divine existence. Nevertheless, the most distinctive quality of salvation is its use as a value norm. It is one of the four Purusharths i.e. one of the most important directives of Hindu social life divided in the four Asharamas: Brahmacharya (the life of celibacy), Grahastha (the life of domestic responsibility and work), Vanaprastha (the life of semi-renunciation i.e. renunciation of familiar responsibility), and Sanyasa (the life of complete renunciation). In the Hindu
view, salvation is the culmination of life to which the other three values Dharma, Artha, and Kama invariably lead.

Coming to Lawrence’s conception of salvation, we can assert that it is neither Christian nor Egyptian. It is closer to the Indian view than to any other tradition. In India salvation is the summum bonum of life, its crowning glory and its invariably its last chapter. Salvation can be achieved through the grace of God as well as by self-effort. This self-effort may include the means and exercises of radically different nature, extending from the exacting yogic exercises and contemplative and meditative practices, to the act of performing rituals and undergoing the purificatory rituals like Sanskaras and sexual or orgastic practices and ceremonies. There is no denying the fact that sex or orgasm have an approval of the people at large. Sex is not only a means of physical pleasure but also a powerful means for inducing higher states of consciousness and to achieve oneness, yielding an experience similar to the mystic experience of oneness.

Despite strong opposition of the puritan section of society, in India there are sects which openly advocate and demonstrate the centrality of sexuality in the quest for salvation. In our times we have its most vociferous champion in the person of Acharya Rajneesh. The Indian godman eventually developed an elaborate blueprint of achieving the final state of meditation through sexual exercises. Interestingly some of these Indian concepts find their way in The Rainbow.
The Indian ideas which influenced Lawrence's view of salvation are chiefly related to sexuality, love, and marriage. For Lawrence salvation is purely an earthly experience which can be achieved through sex and love in the form of an ideal marriage. For Lawrence an ideal marriage is not necessarily a ceremonial marriage but a union of two independent persons who maintain a state of separateness in their togetherness. In the union of this form childbearing is no less liberating than the sexual experience. More importantly the togetherness which he envisages, inspires man and woman to develop their contact with the unknown. In Lawrence's world view naturalism or for that matter the worship of the world and its values, is a formidable factor. However, no less formidable is the search for the unknown. In Indian world view, the material well being (Artha) and sex desire (Kama) lead to salvation (Moksha). Much in the same way Lawrence's naturalism or world-worship paves the way for salvation. Graham Hough finds in him a movement from the known to the unknown. He believes that the novelist is engaged in bringing about a harmony between the seen and the unseen.

Discussing *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, Graham Hough writes that besides naturalism, there is also something else which struggles to come to the fore: "But something else is always struggling to break through and to find a new form of expression; and just as in *Sons and Lovers* the movement is from the known and the comprehensible to the unknown and the obscure, so in *The Rainbow*. Only here the incomprehensible is represented not by an obscure personal problem but by the search which is conducted by all the principle
characters — most clearly and most consciously by Ursula — for that which is symbolized by the rainbow itself — the harmony of seen and unseen, ‘the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven’. 7

Lawrence’s salvation of here and now is fulfilment in an inclusive sense which is sexual as well as emotional and spiritual. For him sexuality is not something merely physical but cosmic. In The Rainbow he delineates sexuality as a cosmic power operating on every level. Its obsessive instincts are hard to suppress by religious and moral restraints. He regards sex as a means of self-fulfilment, which, in its ultimate analysis, becomes salvation here and now. In India, as discussed in the first chapter, the creation was interpreted in the erotic terms of male and female elements. All the objects of nature animate or inanimate are shown to possess the sexual instinct. If we go through Kalidasa’s Rtusamharam, we find how the trees stretch their arms in the form of their stooping branches to embrace creepers, their wives. These creepers are women which have breast in the form of abundant bunches of flowers and charming lips in the form of quivering leaves:

With breasts of full-blossomed clusters of flowers,
with trembling lips of leaf-buds a tender red,
vines, brides of trees, closely clasped their bridegrooms
with bonds of pliant arms of twinning stems. 8

Lawrence begins The Rainbow with the description of the coupling of heaven and earth in most erotic terms. Although the vein is different, one can hardly miss sexual terms expressing sex as a cosmic force working on every
level. To quote a few lines from the novel describing the life of Brangwens at the Marsh farm:

They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding.

(The Rainbow 42)

Indeed, Lawrence's absorption of Indian idea of sex as a cosmic force is important. But even more important is his assimilation of Indian idea of sex as an instinct which cannot be suppressed by religion and culture. If it is suppressed, it makes the body sick. If this sex instinct is allowed to flow freely, it can produce higher states of consciousness. In its most modern form this idea appears in Acharya Rajneesh's path breaking book *From Sex to Superconsciousness*. To quote from the book:

Our minds revolve around sex. No animal in the world is sexual like human beings. Human beings are sexual around the clock - awake or asleep, sitting or walking, sex has become everything to them. Because of this enmity towards sex, because of this opposition and suppression, it has become like an ulcer in their being. One cannot be free from something that is the very root of one's life, but in the process of this constant inner conflict one's entire life can become sick - and it has.\(^9\)

Rajneesh attacks religion and culture for making sex as a taboo subject. He advises people not to fight this basic energy but rather to use it as a means to augment the stream of life. To quote again from his book:

And it is against this sex energy that religions and cultures are pouring poison into the minds of human beings. They are trying to engage human beings in a fight against it. They have entangled humans in this battle against their own basic energy - and so humans have become wretched, pathetic, devoid of love,
false, nobodies. One has not to fight with sex, but to create a friendship with it and elevate the stream of life to the heights.\textsuperscript{10}

Lawrence on his part is aware of the human dilemma caused by the sexual urge in the individual and social restraints. In \textit{The Rainbow}, he demonstrates the conflict of sex instinct and social demands through a story that covers three generations. Tom is the living embodiment of this dilemma. In his adolescence he feels the tension of sexuality and social demands. Driven by the sexual instinct he allows himself to be seduced by a prostitute in a drunken state at a public house. But after this incident he feels frustrated and develops a guilty conscience. He is torn between a desire for more sex and the moral expectation of his mother. He continues to be tormented by this dilemma for quite sometime. Lawrence captures this dilemma in a powerful language. He brings out his protagonist’s experience, subsequent disillusionment, and frustration as well as his religious impulse. Lawrence writes:

For some time after this, he was quieter, more conscious when he drank, more backward from companionship. The disillusion of his first carnal contact with woman, strengthened by his innate desire to find in a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses, put a bit in his mouth. He had something to lose which he was afraid of losing, which he was not sure even of possessing. This first affair did not matter much: but the business of love was, at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him.

\textit{(The Rainbow 54)}

Lawrence recreates the tension of Tom’s mind in his imitative style. Tom’s inner conflict echoes the inner conflict of Rajneesh’s man who becomes
sick because of suppressed sex desire. He too suffers from the mortifying tension produced by sex instinct and the effort to suppress it. He becomes painfully conscious that it is hard to get fulfilment from the type of sex he had. It is harder still to suppress the blood-boiling instinct. Lawrence explains how his (Tom’s) imagination becomes obsessed with lustful scenes which eventually fill his mind with anger and resentment:

He was tormented now with sex desire, his imagination reverted always to lustful scenes. But what really prevented his returning to a loose woman, over and above the natural squeamishness, was the recollection of the paucity of the last experience.

He did not know there was any difference in him, exactly; for the most part he was filled with slow anger and resentment. But he knew he was always thinking of women, or a woman, day in, day out, and that infuriated him. He could not get free: and he was ashamed. He had one or two sweethearts, starting with them.

(The Rainbow 54-55)

He despises not so much the encounter but the experience which fails to bring the desired result:

He did not despise himself nor the girl. But he despised the net result in him of the experience – he despised it deeply and bitterly.

(The Rainbow 55)

Now the question is what is the desired result? It is obviously the sense of fulfilment, emotional as well as physical. Tom does not get this emotional fulfilment from his wife. Hence he turns to his step daughter Anna. He develops a sort of Brahmi love for Anna. But Anna too cannot be a fit medium of fulfilment. For emotional fulfilment involves physical fulfilment for which
wife is the only legitimate medium. Subsequently, Tom returns to his wife. This time he gets what he wants. He awakens to a new feeling, the feeling of supreme communication with this experience. He seems to have an experience of religious convergence:

Their coming together now, after two years of married life, was much more wonderful to them than it had been before. It was the entry into another circle of existence, it was the baptism to another life, it was the complete confirmation.

(The Rainbow 133)

Apart from sexual fulfilment woman has other avenues of fulfilment as well. The experience of pregnancy and of being mother to the child can bring fulfilment, which culminates into an experience of convergence. The awareness that she is an active participant in the creative process of the universe in a divine-like way, can produce an experience equal to that of communion. To quote:

To Anna, the baby was a complete bliss and fulfilment. Her desires sank into abeyance, her soul was in bliss over the baby.

(The Rainbow 249)

She seemed to pass off into a kind of rapture of motherhood, her rapture of motherhood was everything.

(The Rainbow 255)

Anna continued in her violent trance of motherhood, always busy, often harassed, but always contained in her trance of motherhood.

(The Rainbow 262)
Anna’s reaction reminds us of three obligations of Hindu religion conceived of as debts: Matra-Rina (the debt of mother), Pitri-Rina (the debt of father), and Guru-Rina (the debt of teacher). Every Hindu is required to fulfil these obligations. There is no wonder that the birth of a child becomes a big occasion because for this birth parents feel liberated from their debts. Mothering in India is considered a pious duty. Although the cause of Anna’s exuberance may be different but her spirit of participation symbolizes the same thing. Anna’s husband William also finds fulfilment but his fulfilment is the fulfilment of release and rebirth after sexual union which for him is a violent and extreme feeling like death and which is accompanied by maddening intoxication. He gets a new lease of life and a new energy to fulfil his social obligations.

In the third generation the sense of fulfilment makes no further headway. It is in fact becomes retrogressive in as much as sexuality comes to involve the old conflict of the male and the female elements and the possessive desire of woman to annihilate her male counterpart. The protagonist of the third generation, Ursula is a woman of complex character. Her mentality is a hotch-potch of mystic desires, religious leaning, passionate love, lesbian experience, and the conflicting male and female elements. She longs for individual salvation but her quest brings disastrous results. She wants to realize her “maximum self” through her passionate love which arouses a maddening passion in her lover, Skrebensky:
It was begun now, this passion, and must go on, the passion of Ursula to know her own maximum self, limited and so defined against him. She could limit and define herself against him, the male, she could be her maximum self, female, oh female, triumphant for one moment in exquisite assertion against the male, in supreme contradistinction to the male.

(The Rainbow 349)

In her physical encounter with her lover, she feels emerging victorious:

And her soul crystallised with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there, the victim, consumed, annihilated. She had triumphed: he was not any more.

(The Rainbow 368)

Nevertheless, she cannot enjoy her victory since she is overcome by a slow horror of her own self. When Anton departs, she develops a peculiar feeling in which she finds that the entire world has become hostile to her lover. Much at the same time, the flames of sexual life work as a disease within her. But still she is hopeful, as she sees a beautiful vision of the rainbow in the sky which is a symbol of hope. Subsequently, she does not give up her search for the individual fulness of being.

Likewise, Anton’s quest for fulfilment also proves futile. The chief cause of his failure is his approach towards sex and woman. Sex, for him, is a physical passion and women are simply bodies or the sources of physical pleasure. Naturally, he is tempted by Ursula not by some moral, intellectual or spiritual quality but by her body. He does not think of the fulfilment of his whole being but also the consummation of physical love:

If he could but have her, how he would enjoy her! If he could but net her brilliant, cold, salt-burning body in the soft iron of his
own hands, net her, capture her, hold her down, how madly he would enjoy her.

(The Rainbow 367-368)

Even though Skrebensky gives maximum physical satisfaction to Ursula, he is not able to win her. In his attempt to make him acceptable to her, he fails and fails miserably, for he cannot give the kind of maleness demanded by her. Sex has even its negative impact on Skrebensky. It does not provide him release and rebirth. On the contrary it leaves him dead, robbing him of motion, light, heat, and vitality that he possessed earlier:

The fight, the struggle for consummation was terrible. It lasted till it was agony to his soul, till he succumbed, till he gave way as if dead, and lay with his face buried, partly in her hair, partly in the sand, motionless, as if he would be motionless now for ever, hidden away in the dark, buried, only buried, he only wanted to be buried in the goodly darkness, only that, and no more.

(The Rainbow 532)

Ursula and Skrebensky do not feel the type of fulfilment experienced by Lydia and Tom as well as Anna and William. It is presumably because they cannot develop the type of love which invigorated Ursula's grandparents and parents.

Tom Brangwen is the exponent of a spontaneous love which transforms the whole being and can be realized only through marriage. It is based on the realization of the wonder of womanhood which is as much a revealer of the ethereal splendour of the cosmos as the instrument of rebirth. This love completely accepts the otherness as well as the independence of woman. "It should," writes Chaman Nahal, "just happen, in spite of oneself; and once it does happen, it should enrich the self, make the self deeper, make one's whole outlook on life pregnant with understanding." The description of this type of
spontaneous love can be found in the great Indian classics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and in Kalidasa’s works. This ideal though non-existent in modern India, fascinated Lawrence. “For though,” says Nahal, “most marriages are arranged in India in these days, the concept of love, as it does exist and as it is reviewed and presented in the great classics of the country, is one that would have been applauded by Lawrence: instinctive and uncalculated urge of two persons for each other.”

This urge can be found both in Ram and Sita. While Ram feels a sense of “utter peace at the radiance of Sita,” Sita is also “bewitched like a peahen watching the moon.” For Ram the body of Sita “enclosed the very secret of the universe.” Sita’s eyes become heavy at the sight of Ram. Both of them are swept off their feet and become spell-bound. They cannot give the expression of their feelings. This urge can also be found in Shakuntla’s love for Dushyanta in the Mahabharata, later described so beautifully by Kalidasa in his Shakuntalam. This type of spontaneous love is central to Indian literature. “The young man and the young woman,” states Nahal, “come together, often in hostile circumstances; they know nothing of each other, have never met before, have never spoken a word; and they look at each other, suddenly conceive of a great longing for each other, and a deep attachment ensues.”

In The Rainbow Tom and Lydia are the living examples of this Indian type of spontaneous and creative love. Tom, in spite of her sexual encounters with the prostitute, is not after sheer physical sexuality but he is after finding “a woman the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses”
(The Rainbow 54). He knows that “the business of love was, at the bottom of his soul, the most serious and terrifying of all to him” (The Rainbow 54). His urge possessed an intensity which is rooted in his very soul and which erupts in creative action. He has no preconceived image of her beloved. He does not look for a particular type of woman but he only desires to be united to the one who can stir his soul. When he meets Lydia, he feels “quiet, suspended, rarified.” His reaction is spontaneous but at the same time it is an expression of complex feelings. Lawrence writes:

He could not bear to think or to speak, nor make any sound or sign, nor change his fixed motion. He could scarcely bear to think of her face. He moved within the knowledge of her, in the world that was beyond reality.

The feeling that they had exchanged recognition possessed him like a madness, like a torment. How could he be sure, what confirmation had he? The doubt was like a sense of infinite space, a nothingness, annihilating. He kept within his breast the will to surety. They had exchanged recognition.

(The Rainbow 64)

However, Lydia’s reaction is not so spontaneous. Her courtship with Tom is rather unsteady as she is caught between enthusiasm and indifference.

The love between Anna and William is also an expression of spontaneity, creativeness, and genuine urge. When they meet, they have unprecedented experience. Anna feels that she has found a real being after a long search. While she goes to church with Will and sits next to him, she finds herself in another world of illumination. Her soul feels this illumination and experiences something entering into her inmost being. She becomes aware of an enriching influence hitherto unknown to her.
The colour came streaming from the painted window above her. It lit on the dark wood of the pew, on the stone, worn aisle, on the pillar behind her cousin, and on her cousin’s hands, as they lay on his knees. She sat amid illumination, illumination and luminous shadow all around her, her soul very bright. She sat, without knowing it, conscious of the hands and motionless knees of her cousin. Something strange had entered into her world, something entirely strange and unlike what she knew.

She was curiously elated. She sat in a glowing world of unreality, very delightful. A brooding light, like laughter, was in her eyes. She was aware of a strange influence entering in to her, which she enjoyed. It was a dark enrichening influence she had not known before. She did not think of her cousin. But she was startled when his hands moved.

(The Rainbow 147-148)

Much in the same way Will is also greatly excited by the company of Anna. He feels the glow of a passion which kindles his whole being. He feels that his heart is fired. Anna also feels the charm of his presence:

The glow remained in him, the fire burned, his heart was fierce like a sun. He enjoyed his unknown life and his own self. And he was ready to go back to the Marsh.

Without knowing it, Anna was wanting him to come. In him she had escaped. In him the bounds of her experience were transgressed: he was the hole in the wall, beyond which the sunshine blazed on an outside world.

(The Rainbow 151)

The fulfilment through love can be realized only through centralized sexuality or marriage. Lawrence’s idea of marriage is closer to the spirit of ancient Indian ways of marriage. As we have discussed earlier, the Hindu religion believes in sex as a value or Purushartha leading to salvation. Man and woman unite in marriage to seek salvation in this world and hereafter. In the Hindu way of life every ceremony or ritual or Sanskar is performed by husband and wife in unison. For the Hindus believed that only in togetherness they can
achieve the fulness of their social and religious life. In Indian society husband and wife have their specified jurisdictions. They are supposed to work inside their territories without coming in each other’s way. While wife is the queen of household world, husband is the lord of the outside world. In this way, they have their separate duties. In this state of separateness in togetherness, they seek contact with the unknown and achieve salvation.

Lawrence’s view of marriage and married life have a close kinship with Indian view. Although he does not consider the ceremony of marriage as a precondition of love and sexual life, he gives prominence to the characters who give utmost importance to the institution of marriage. He believes that after marriage man and woman, as husband and wife, begin a new life, the life of separateness in togetherness. They are domiciles of a new universe. While zealously defending their individual identities, they endeavour to achieve the state of fulfilment. When Tom and Lydia are married, they begin to feel the strain of their new life. Lawrence gives an elaborate description of the experience of their married state:

It made a great difference to him, marriage. Things became so remote and of so little significance, as he knew the powerful source of his life, his eyes opened on a new universe, and he wondered in thinking of his triviality before. A new, calm relationship showed to him in the things he saw, in the cattle he used, the young wheat as it eddied in a wind.

And each time he returned home, he went steadily, expectantly, like a man who goes to a profound, unknown satisfaction. At dinner-time, he appeared in the doorway, hanging back a moment from entering, to see if she was there. He saw her setting the plates on the white-scrubbed table. Her arms were slim, she had a slim body and full skirts, she had a dark, shapely head with closed-banded hair. Somehow it was her
head, so shapely and poignant, that revealed her his woman to him. As she moved about clothed closely, full-skirted and wearing her little silk apron, her dark hair smoothly parted, her head revealed itself to him in all its subtle, intrinsic beauty, and he knew she was his woman, he knew her essence, that it was his to possess. And he seemed to live thus in contact with her, in contact with the unknown, the unaccountable and incalculable.

(The Rainbow 95-96)

Even the first meeting of Lawrence’s man and woman produces this experience of “the unknown, the unaccountable and incalculable.” This experience reminds us of the experience of Ram and Sita in the Ramayana and Shakuntla and Dushyanta in the Mahabharata. However, marriage in its wake brings some problems which are peculiar to it. These problems frequently threaten the life of sexuality, the independence, the otherness, and sensitivity of the partners. The birth of a child, though an occasion of great joys, in itself involves a danger of some sort. The parents have to attune themselves to the rhythms of a new life of parenthood. As in India so in Lawrence, child bearing poses no problem. It rather ushers a new chapter in one’s life. For the mother child bearing is certainly a relief. In The Rainbow we should not be surprised to find Anna’s emotional outburst in a sort of ecstatic dance in pregnancy. In fact, pregnancy brings in her a sense of deep spiritual satisfaction. Graham Hough writes: “The happiness of Anna in her pregnancy affords another point of rest, her drowsy, enchanted, self-sufficient contentment. Yet this very self-sufficiency generates fresh conflicts; for Will is excluded by it, and his bitter jealousy and anger is poisonous. This again passes as her time draws near, and
when the child is born Anna has a sense of complete fulfilment and victory. Soon she is with child again, and lapses again into a vague content.15

Even though the father may be a little embarrassed and may not have the same feeling of ecstasy, he also takes a sigh of relief, as the new arrival ensures the prolonging of his race. As soon as the husband realizes that the end of marriage is not merely sexual satisfaction but something greater, or to be precise, salvation. He becomes conscious of the real worth of a woman as the symbol of something other, awful, something unknown, and something beyond him. We can visualize this sort of experience in the life of Tom and Lydia. The dissatisfaction and misunderstanding that threaten the initial stages of married life gradually evaporates. Tom comes to appreciate the otherness of his wife. He is overcome by a new feeling imbued with a sense of discovery. He now comes to know what Lydia is to him and he is to Lydia. With this knowledge of separateness in togetherness, they feel themselves transfigured. Evidently transfiguration is a precondition to salvation. Lawrence writes:

Their feet trod strange ground of knowledge; their footsteps were lit-up with discovery. Wherever they walked, it was well, the world re-echoed round them in discovery. They went gladly and forgetful. Everything was lost, and everything was found. The new world was discovered, it remained only to be explored.

They had passed through the doorway into the further space, where movement was so big, that it contained bonds and constraints and labours, and still was complete liberty. She was the doorway to him, he to her. At last they had thrown open the doors, each to the other, and had stood in the doorways facing each other, whilst the light flooded out from behind on to each of their faces, it was the transfiguration, the glorification, the admission.

And always the light of the transfiguration burned on in their hearts. He went his way, as before, she went her way, to the
rest of the world there seemed no change. But to the two of
them, there was the perpetual wonder of the transfiguration.

(The Rainbow 133)

This discovery also reveals the significance of the living moment that is
of Here and Now. Tom who was earlier tormented by his past memories,
particularly by his imagination of Lydia’s first husband, now feels liberated, as
he realizes the futility of the past in defining the present moment. It is not the
past but the present which is essential for the happiness of life. As he joins
Lydia “in her reverence for the passing moment,” he feels a sense of humility,
the greatest of Christian virtues. “Having realized this,” writes Chaman Nahal,
“they almost realize God, whatever that recognition may mean, right here and
now.”¹⁶ The life of Lydia and Tom becomes an embodiment of the experience
of the presence of divine reality in every moment of life. This divine reality
surfaces in the form of an instinctive and a smooth togetherness as well as in
the form of spontaneity of their response to each other. Lawrence writes:

Now He was declared to Brangwen and to Lydia
Brangwen, as they stood together. When at last they had joined
hands, the house was finished, and the Lord took up his abode.
And they were glad.

The days went on as before, Brangwen went out to his
work, his wife nursed her child and attended in some measure to
the farm. They did not think of each other – why should they?
Only when she touched him, he knew her instantly, that she was
with him, near him, that she was the gateway and the way out,
that she was beyond, and that he was travelling in her through the
When she called, he answered, when he asked, her response came
at once, or at length.

(The Rainbow 133-134)
Hence it is in their married life that Tom and Lydia get fulfilment which is the be-all and the end-all of human life. It is only through marriage that man becomes sure of his identity as a man. Much in the same way a woman also discovers her identity. Interestingly, marriage as pointed out earlier, is conspicuously an institution of this world. It is, therefore, an embodiment of all the joys which earth offers to a man. Lawrence deals with the institution of marriage elaborately and with a sense of profundity. However, in The Rainbow he defines marriage in somewhat lyrical terms:

Marriage is what we’re made for... A man enjoys being a man; for what purpose was he made a man, if not to enjoy it? ... And likewise a woman enjoys being a woman: at least we surmise she does... Now, for a man to be a man it takes a woman. And for a woman to be a woman, it takes a man... Therefore we have marriage... There’s no marriage in heaven, but on earth there is marriage... There’s very little else, on earth, but marriage. You can talk about making money, or saving souls. You can save your own soul seven times over, and you may have a mint of money, but your soul goes gnawin’, gnawin’, gnawin’, and it says there’s something it must have. In heaven there is no marriage. But on earth there is marriage, else heaven drops out, and there’s no bottom to it.

(The Rainbow 176-177)

There is a certain sense of religiosity in Lawrence’s treatment of salvation but his religiousness is not Christian at all. His sense of salvation is rather anti-Christian in the sense that he demonstrates the irrelevance of the Christian idea through the failures of Will and Ursula. William desires to seek salvation but he fails in his attempt. Church is not the place of his salvation but rather “the crisis in his relations with his wife (Chapter VII) [that] occurs in
Lincoln Cathedral, and is directly concerned with their different attitudes towards the building.  

Ursula’s position is even worse, she is caught in a sense of belief and disbelief. Although she likes the idea of salvation, she does not approve of the traditional means. “She is enthralled by the idea of salvation,” writes Graham Hough, “but she resents its means.”

Caught in a wave of confusion she questions many traditions and beliefs of Christianity. For instance, she does not believe the humanity of Christ. But at the same time she believes that He belongs to another world. In a series of questions she goes on to ask whether there are other sons of God besides Adam and Christ. Hough writes: “‘The Sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took to them wives of all which they chose’. But who were the Sons of God? Adam, the only man directly created by God, or Jesus the only-begotten son? Perhaps God had other offspring besides Adam and Jesus – and perhaps these other sons had known no expulsion and no fall.”

For her salvation must come from the sexual union of a man created by God along with Adam and Christ. “It is,” writes Hough, “in the form of one of these that Ursula feels that salvation must come to her. As a man finds his salvation in a woman, so a woman must find it in a man. Her salvation must be brought by a man, but man who appears to her as one of the authentic sons of God. Ursula is very willing to use the language of Scripture, but the content of the words in transformed. Nor can her unchristened heart accept the gospel ethics.” On the whole Lawrence’s conception of salvation through love,
To recapitulate, *The Rainbow* embodies the Indian idea of salvation which is one of the four cardinal values of the Indian way of life, others being Dharma (religion or morality), Artha (wealth), Kama (sex). Through the story of three successive generations Lawrence pleads that through centralized sexuality realized in love and marriage, one can achieve the state of salvation. That is to say that through sex one can achieve not only sexual pleasure and a sense of release but also a state of impersonality. Furthermore, through the spontaneity of love one can realize the instinctive and the uncalculated urge and the stirring of the soul to seek something higher. On the whole the realization of sex and love in marriage can bring one in contact with the unknown. Lawrence's conception of salvation is strictly earth-bound. For him the moment of fulfilment Here and Now are the moments of salvation. It is with the help of each other that man and woman can achieve this state during their life.

Lawrence enacts the drama of salvation through the lives of Tom and Lydia, Will and Anna, Skrebensky and Ursula, the representatives of three successive generations of Brangwens. All these men and woman have an experience of salvation, though in varying degree. It is perhaps Lydia who tops the list among these seekers of salvation. In the first generation Tom, with a series of misgivings, ultimately experiences the moments of release and fulfilment. In the second generation, Will only half-realizes the bliss of
salvation as he loss his way in his Christian proclivities. The best moments of Anna's salvation come through her childbearing and child rearing, as she feels the ecstasy of fulfilment during her pregnancy. But in the third generation, both Skrebensky and Ursula fail to achieve salvation through their union. Ursula, though inspired by the Christian idea of salvation, thinks to achieve it through sexual union with man. Nevertheless, she does not succeed in the long run, since she is obsessed by an ideal which is rather imperfect and ill-conceived.
Chapter 3 – Notes


10. Acharya Rajneesh 19.

12Nahal 150.

13Ramacharitmanas qtd. Nahal 150.

14Nahal 150.

15Hough 82.

16Nahal 165.

17Hough 77.

18Hough 85.

19Hough 85.

20Hough 85.