

AGRARIAN VS INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY: CRITIQUING RELATIONSHIPS IN D H LAWRENCE'S *THE RAINBOW*

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Abstract

*The paper briefly discusses the effects of the emergence of a dying consciousness in the age of industrialization and technology—a sense of emptying of interpersonal feelings, and how industrialization seized the land of farmers and spelt disaster to family and communal relations thus posing a question of ecological consciousness. D H Lawrence, a major novelist of the early twentieth century, insistently voices his protest against distancing, the emptiness of modern life and its overwhelming materialism. Mechanical, disintegrated, disoriented are some of the keywords he uses to describe the crippling effect of the industrial society on individual and community life. The present paper looks into the wave of social change from an agrarian society to an industrial ethos in D H Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and how it has affected the family structure, the integrity and wholeness of individual and communal life. The industrial contamination has changed the perceptions of Lawrence's characters such as Ursula and Anna of second and third generation in particular whereas Tom has an altogether different personality. The paper also seeks to throw light on some aspects of Lawrence's crucial relevance to our own uprooting social situation and the eco-critical concerns prevalent in modern times.*

Keywords: Environment, Industrialization, Disintegration, Mechanical, Individualization

D H Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915) is one of the most eloquent of English novels to record the prophetic awareness of consequences of the social revolution which remarkably presents the individual's loss of his sense of community and identity. It traces the history of three generations of Brangwens where Tom Brangwen remains at the farm and other members of the family move to city and adopt the deadness of modern industrial manner. It illustrates the story of a community in its last flare of vitality and in a process of gradual dying away of all relationships and feelings which are shaken by the great change. The novel begins with a vivid portrayal of the life in rural England particularly in the midland counties around 1840. It traces the advent of industrialism and its impact on human civilization and finally goes on

to study the disintegration of life in the early years of the twentieth century. As Raymond Williams observes, it is the condition of mind rather than industry which is instrumental in producing the ugliness of an industrial society. On this point Lawrence is emphatic:

The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile....

The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread. (qtd in Dahiya 73)

Eco-criticism, a recent theory accepted worldwide, is known by many names: environmentalism, Green Studies and Eco-criticism. It came into eminence in 1980 and appeared in William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism" in 1978. It designates the critical writings that explore the relation between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the damage being wrought on that environment by human activities (Abrams 98). In twentieth Century, the warnings by scientists and conservationists increased. Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) drew attention to the degradation of environment and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) discussed about the impact of pesticides on wildlife. While the other movements in criticism were directed towards social and political justice, eco-critics focused on ultimate survival of human life which is at stake. None can deny the fact that along with issues like racism and feminism, it is environmentalism or the harsh impact of industrialization that discusses connection between environment, industrialization and technology. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* reinforces the harmonious connection between nature and man and illustrates the loss of human naturalness with the emergence of industrial era.

Culture and tradition are principal moorings in an individual's life and has a direct relation with the environment/ nature. As one moves away from one's roots and natural environment there comes a sense of alienation and emptiness that one confronts. D H Lawrence wrote at a time when England was undergoing a sea change of values and beliefs. He tried to incorporate and dramatize his persona of romantic figure who 'rejects the claims of society' in his literary/artistic creations. Taking over the major criticism of industrialism from nineteenth -century tradition, Lawrence was very much involved with the business of getting free of the industrial system. In fact, he knew too much about society and knew it too directly and saw the version of individualism as a thin covering of the industrialism. The deep and strong 'instinct of community' was essential in Lawrence's thinking. By attacking the industrial society of England, he illustrated on quest for community bearing his resemblance to William Cowper's 'God made the country, Man made the Town'. In his writings an emphasis is laid on the preservation of the 'spontaneous life-activity' against rigidities of categorization and abstraction. Society means living together in a natural environment distancing form covetousness. To live together people must have some standard—some material standard. He states:

Men are free when they are in a living homeland,
not when they are straying and breaking away.

Men are free when they belong to a living, organic,
believing community.....(Lawrence 16)

Lawrence's point is that change must come first in sentiments and emotions. He knew how the consciousness and the environment were linked. The attempt to separate material needs, and the industrial infectivity, inner dryness are the outcome of man's loss of contact with nature. The 'suburban separation of work and life and natural environment', according to Lawrence has been the most common response of crises of industrialism.

The central focus in the *The Rainbow* is on the emergence of 'dying consciousness'—a sense of emptying of interpersonal/communal feelings, and how advent of industrialization not only usurped the land of English farmers in the 19th century, but also spelt disaster to family and communal relations causing threat to the natural environment. Lawrence presents Tom Brangwen in *The Rainbow* as someone who still has roots in an old tradition whereas some remnants of old community is also retained in the life Anna and Will. Ursula, the new woman and a representative of the modern consciousness and psyche, has nothing at all of what sustained the two previous generations. The social change has affected the personal relations and the entire family structure. While life in the old English rural community made relationships grow in a natural, crude, spontaneous and unique manner, technology and industrialization brought artificiality, making it an emotionless and devoid of feelings. An individual's world turned upside down, as it were, when they were uprooted from the old organic order as it happens with Tom Brangwen and Lydia and their generation.

In the very first chapter of *The Rainbow*, Lawrence gives a brief description of the Marsh farm situated on the bank of the river Erewash where this river separates Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire. For many generations the Brangwens have been living on the farm unaffected by any sophisticating process, they have a great affinity with the peasants who lived the life of pure instinct in an intimate relationship with mother earth. Life in their generation goes on in a leisurely pace:

They are fresh blood, slow speaking people, revealing themselves
plainly, but slowly, so that one could watch the change in their eyes
from laughter to anger, blue, lit up laughter to a hard- blue staring anger. (5)

It suggests the utter simplicity of those people. Their eyes reveal their inner mind as clearly as scent reveals a flower. Tom Brangwen is the representative of this natural world following his instinct rather than his intellect. But his son-in-law, Will, is no longer interested in farming and cattle breeding. Tom, the young farmer awakened to a troubled sense of the restrictions of the Brangwen life, comes eventually into his own vision of a life beyond, once he has had his encounter with the complacent pretty girl. When Tom sees the foreign lady walking toward him on the road, he knows that she is the chance he must take. The foreignness of Tom's wife, Lydia, represents, disturbingly enough, the essential distance

between nature and industry. Tom's aspirations toward the alien woman are inarticulate but not unconscious. Until he meets Lydia, he sees the life which community offers him but with the arrival of Lydia, the breakup of the community is too sudden and unanticipated as railways and canals cut across the enclosed spaces of the mind. The individual is freed from traditional unquestioned pre-occupations. Tom Brangwen seeks out and lives with strange new world but he still has the traces of old inarticulate traditional world dominant in him. His steadiness, half way between two worlds, is constantly in danger which can only be shaken by his step-daughter, Anna, whom he desperately loves but who has come too far from the past to rest in quiet suspensions of judgment:

...She tried to discuss people; she wanted to know what was meant, but her father became uneasy Anna could not go on with her fault finding, her criticism, her expression of dissatisfactions. (104)

Individual aspirations are seen high in Anna. For Anna and Will, marriage seems at first sunnier and simpler. They have moved very far coming out of the shadow of the old Brangwen world. Tom and Lydia's love was restraint but on the contrary Will and Anna are prepared to defy the whole world for their love. The process of industrialization has introduced an element of complexity in life. Will and Anna are definitely more complex beings with subtler responses than Tom and Lydia. The loss of harmony in rural life is pictured in their marital conflict. The flood at the Marsh does not just kill Tom Brangwen; it also marks the end of an era, a way of life. Naess sees ecological harmony and equilibrium that promotes a holistic view of the interactions of organisms with their environment.... They recognize earth's intrinsic value and call for an end to modern industrial technology's destruction of earth system (qtd in Posthumous 34). When Tom looks at a few ugly houses standing in the town, it reminds him of the devastating state man's life became due to his breaking up away from environment.

Ursula, who is from the third generation, has nothing in common with her grandmother Lydia or mother Anna. She is a depiction of modern woman, who aspires to make a mark in man's world. Through the quarters of the novel we find Ursula amidst an emblematic landscape, which aptly projects her state of being constantly on the verge of setting foot into another world. The injunctions of community and family have been broken and the individual is responsible only to himself and his own impulses. Ursula admires and fiercely loves the handsome, independent woman Winifred Inger. She wanted to be free like Winifred Inger. She discovers about her uncle during the visit to her uncle's colliery that:

His real mistress was the machine and the real mistress of Winifred was the machine. She too, Winifred, worshipped the impure abstraction, the mechanisms of matter. Then there in the machine, in the service of the machine was she free of from the clog and degradation of human feeling. (325)

Ursula's relationship with Winifred Inger is more of perfunctory. The final disruption of relationship of Ursula and makes Ursula loose her completeness. The agrarian confidence of 18th century has been counterpointed throughout with loss, melancholy and regret (qtd in Coupe 51). Anton Skrebensky becomes a mere machine by subjugating his individuality to an abstraction called state and Ursula refused to merge her individuality with a machine. The growing mechanical life has broken down all conventional ethics and morals. Ursula goes to the industrial town of Wiggiston; she is restrained by the exhibition of malice that makes the whole life meaningless:

Ursula looked out of the window and saw the proud,
demon- like colliery with her wheels twinkling in the heavens,
the formless. (324)

The community in *The Rainbow* is an idea from its individuals, who are its only embodiments. Lawrence's individuals are diverse and distinctive from one another. The ugliness of industrialization, changes caused by industrialization, socio-economic changes caused eco-critical damages thus causing damage to relations as well. The harmonious portraying of literature, communities and natural environment presented the models for sustainable living. Lawrence in *The Rainbow* has condemned mechanization, and exploitation of resources while posing ecological consciousness.

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