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D.H.LAWRENCE: A CRITIC OF INDUSTRIAL LIFE IN THE NOVELS THE RAINBOW AND WOMEN IN LOVE

POMPI BARUAH

Abstract:

Born and brought up in Nottinghamshire, a region with a mixed landscape of industrial and rural England, Lawrence found himself in the midst of rapid industrialization. Economic exploitation replaced the earlier idyllic beauty of the place with heaps of waste earth. In Lawrence's words : The real tragedy of England as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness. The country is so lovely: the man-made England is so vile...¹ From the above it is obvious that Lawrence abhorred what he saw modern industry doing to the land and people around him.

KEYWORDS:

Rainbow . Industrial Life , Novels , Lawrence.

INTRODUCTION :

This disgust became ingrained in his mind and later became one of the powerful themes in most of his novels. Thus Lawrence was concerned throughout his life with the ugliness that industrialization brought to the landscape of England. For instance the first chapter of Sons and Lovers is an indictment of the ugliness of industrialism. "The Bottoms" succeeded to "Hell Row". Hell row was a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brookside on Greenhill Lane. There lived the colliers who worked in the little gin-pits two fields away.² As a novelist Lawrence was concerned about the impact of industrialization on an individual's struggle towards fulfilment. Lawrence very clearly envisaged that one of the manifestations of industrialization is the accumulation of human wants. Wants lead to the frustration of individual fulfillment. Vitality of men are sapped when the will is not in balance of intuitive life, or what Lawrence called blood consciousness. In Gerald in Women In Love we see the mechanical will in pursuit of acquisition of power. This will to power is the fundamental problem in an industrial society. As Lawrence puts it : When pure mechanization or materialism sets in, the soul is automatically pivoted, and the most diverse of creatures fall into a common mechanical unision.³ Lawrence used such terms as mechanical,⁴ disintegrated⁵ and amorphousness⁶ to connote the effect of industrial priorities on the individual . Lawrence reacted against the mechanized efficiency of modern industrial society because it restrained people to disheartening inertness. Gerald in Women in Love has established a perfect human machine⁷ and reduced the miners to mere mechanical instruments⁸. Proficient men with technical knowledge and adopting scientific methods took control of the miner's lives. This had an adverse effect on the miners. The miners who had rebelled against the benign regime of Mr. Crich, became insensitive towards hope, happiness and even hatred. Along with the miners Gerald too could not escape from the torments of the mechanical system: ...when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do , he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was...He was afraid in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of⁹.

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The distinctiveness of Lawrence's attack on mechanical civilization was his deep insight into the character of social organization. The industrial organization of the society merely exposed its generic mechanical character. The chapter entitled 'The Industrial Magnate' in *Women In Love* gives a vivid picture of an industrial society from a psychological perspective, revealing all its self defeating aspects. Trapped in the antagonism between Thomas Crich and his son Gerald, is the defeated will of the mother, who succumbed like a hawk that sullenly submits to everything.¹⁰ The relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Crich gradually deteriorated into a relation of utter inter-destruction¹¹. This is illustrated in the Chapter 'The Industrial Magnate'. Mr. Crich has loved his wife, but Mrs. Crich had the feeling that he failed to understand her. Though she had given him many children, she considered herself as his prisoner. Her resentment towards him was so deep that even looking at his dead body, she felt he had robbed her of life.

In *The Rainbow* the generations of the Brangwen family had to face great difficulties as they moved from the farm, to the village and on to the middle class urban life. Economically, the individuals prospered and gained sophistication. But as they became disoriented from the rhythms of non human nature or the old pattern of life style, the lack of passion and beauty, aggravated their dissatisfactions. Initially the civilized world was symbolized to the women by the Vicar and the Squire, who existed outside the narrow circle of farm life. But gradually with the advance of industrialization, the outside life symbolized by the Vicar and the Squire intruded upon the life of the farm. First, the high canal embankment which trespassed across their land left the farm people with bewilderment. The enthusiasm of the inhabitants of the Marsh farm were soon shattered when the peace of the quiet valley was disturbed with the introduction of the railway and the mine: As they worked in the fields from beyond the now familiar embankment came the rhythmic run of the winding engines startling at first, but afterwards a narcotic to the brain.¹² As industrialization engulfed the countryside the agrarian way of life and economy ceased to exist. As Lawrence noted even the farm labourer¹³ became a town bird¹⁴ at heart. The blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coal-dust, the pavements, wet and black. It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beauty has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling...¹⁵

Lawrence saw this version of individualism as a veneer of false consciousness or the antithesis of blood consciousness. There is an ambiguity in Lawrence's vision of the consequences of industrialization, because he is unable to distinguish an individually realized community. The basic contradiction in Lawrence's stance/ vision is that the individual exists in isolation and yet feels the desire for a community of fulfilled individuals in which he can participate for a fuller life. Even when the individual is fulfilled, there is still the dissatisfaction of the quest of belonging to a community made up of fulfilled individuals. This dissatisfaction and frustration is the typical modern dilemma, where the search for fulfillment is endless. On the one hand, Lawrence supports the concept of fulfilled individuals who achieves his fulfillment in isolation. On the other hand in his attack on industrialization he supports the idea of a community of fulfilled individuals which has been destroyed by industrialization.

In *The Rainbow* the mining town of Wiggiston is an example of the horrors brought in the wake of industrialization. Ursula visits Wiggiston, her uncle Tom's colliery and is horrified by its petty and mechanistic environment. Ursula was repelled by the uniformity of the collier's quarters and the whole system appeared to her as some gruesome dream, some ugly, dead, amorphous mood become concrete.¹⁶ The colliers in group going to work along the pavements appeared to Ursula as not individuals full of life and vitality but rather like spectres.¹⁷ Ursula felt, as if their existence had no meaning, and without any hope they continued to live within some utterly unloving shell.¹⁸ This is also Lawrence's opinion of life and the whole industrial system of modern times. Lawrence remarked of his own experience of the Nottingham Colliery: It is this mass of unclean world that we cannot bear...All these little amorphous houses like an eruption, a disease of the clean earth, and all of them full of such a diseased spirit...¹⁹

Ursula in *The Rainbow* hated Uncle Tom and Winifred Inger for embracing the industrial life instead of protesting against it: 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.²⁰ Lawrence remarked that she would make him a good companion she was his mate.²¹ While Tom overseeing the pits at Wiggiston revels in what he reviles, serving the machine that dehumanizes the colliers and makes the squalid town a monstrous side-show to the mechanisms of industry,²² Winifred achieved her consummation in the monstrous mechanisms that held all matter living or dead...²³

Thus we see that the social and material changes are transforming the old rural England into a modern industrial society. The challenges that industrialization offers for the self-development of the individual leads to destruction in the over-materialistic and nihilistic uncle Tom and Winifred Inger. It can also lead to the development of new energies and potentialities as in Ursula. Ursula has moved away

literally and mentally from the world of the Marsh Farm. But she has not yet relinquished her literal and emotional roots with her grandmother, Lydia. The inner spring of vitality in Ursula, is her Brangwen heritage. Contrary to Ursula, Uncle Tom had completely alienated himself from his roots- the Marsh Farm. This leads to Ursula and Uncle Tom's difference in attitudes towards industrialization. Thus, Lawrence dramatizes his anti-industrial attitude through Ursula's disappointments when she visits Uncle Tom.

Lawrence's reaction against industrial society is reflected in his attitude to American society after his visit to America. In a statement contradicting his utopian vision, Lawrence considered America to be the great field for a lust of control in the modern world.²⁴ Productiveness became mandatory, and mechanical work which could not fulfil the individual, was the dilemma at the root of the mighty American industrialization. It destroyed the last residue of creativity and passionate life of the individual. The new Englanders, wielding the sword of the spirit backwards, struck, down the primal impulsive being in every man, leaving only mechanical automatic unit. In so doing they cut and destroyed the living bond between men, the rich passionate contact. And for this passionate contact was substituted the mechanical bond of purposive utility.²⁵

Thus, Loerke and Gudrun in *Women in Love* are artists, but not of art expressing spontaneous feelings, but merely producing art as consumer articles. They were the victims of automatism and mechanical order, in whom creativity has dwindled. In Chapter XXIX in *Women in Love* entitled 'Continental' Loerke tells Gudrun how he reacted when the girl who served as a model for his Lady Godiva would not stand still. I slapped her hard and made her cry- then she'd sit for five minutes²⁶. He admits he beat her nonchalantly²⁷, harder than he ever beat anything²⁸. Thus, Loerke in order to create a work of art induced force and will, instead of allowing spontaneity of the individual to be reflected in his artistic work. For Loerke art and life are not identical but separate.

The fair represented in the great granite frieze Loerke had made for a factory in Cologne represented his attitude that art should interpret industry, as once art interpreted religion²⁹. On the other hand Gerald's success in reorganizing the mining operation into an industry was challenged by Birkin when he asked Gerald in the train to London, what productivity will lead to: ...all the coal...and all the plush furniture, and pina fortes... and our bellies are filled...what then?³⁰ Thus Gerald's death by freezing is symbolic of the failure of that civilization to preserve any contact with the life-source, with warmth and colour through spontaneity, movement interchange³¹.

Gerald and Gudrun the modern industrialist and the artist represented the ideal couple of commercial advertising. In Austria, Gudrun fantasized of what her life with Gerald could be like: ... he would go into Parliament in the conservative interest, he would clear up the great muddle of labour and industry. He was so superbly fearless, masterful, he knew that every problem could be worked out, in life as in geometry. And he would care neither about himself nor about anything but the pure working out of the problem. He was very pure really³². But very soon Gudrun was dissatisfied with this purity. In contrast, although Birkin comes from the same industrial background as Gerald, he has set different goals in life. And Birkin's attempt to find a belief and live it out with Ursula in *Women in Love*, involves a rejection of prevalent industrialization.

In *The Rainbow* Ursula finds her soul utterly degraded by the ugliness and horror of industrialization and the sapping of a person's sensual vitality. Throughout the novel Ursula in spite of the corrupting influence of modern industrial civilization, aspired towards individual fulfillment preserving her natural will to be herself. But her dreams were shattered by the unpleasant experience at Brinsley street school nearby industrial Ilkeston. Ursula entered school expecting to build up a good rapport with her students, and being so personal³³ as a teacher and imparting all her great stores of wealth to her children³⁴. But in reality as soon as she enters the classroom everything appears to be just the opposite. Gradually, Ursula learns that students in this school should be treated not as separate individuals with their own goals and aspirations, but collectively. They must be manipulated by power and will. Thus the effort of the teacher here, instead of trying for the full fledged development of the child, was to bring the will of the children into accordance with his own will³⁵. This could be done only by an abnegation of his personal self³⁶. The students were so accustomed to this dehumanizing system that they were surprised by Ursula's unconventional attitude and her kindness. A change came over Ursula, and she decided ...never more, and never more would she give herself as individual to her class. Never would she, Ursula Brangwen, the girl she was, the person she was, come into contact with those boys. She would be Standard Five teacher, as far away personally from her class as if she had never set foot in St. Philip's school. She would just obliterate them all, and keep herself apart, take them as scholars only³⁷. Ursula's youthful expectations from the school disappears and she gives herself to the mechanical system. In a sense, her outlook widens and she becomes more mature to fathom better the ways of the world. The relationship amongst the teachers was very similar to that of teacher-student relationship which was mechanical and antagonistic. Mr. Harby, the headmaster

of the school represents the effects of an industrial society, where teachers turned schools and colleges into factories for producing ideal workers, with mechanical discipline, order and conformity, rather than fulfilled individuals.

Ursula's experience at college too, filled her with disgust for the university as a sham workshop³⁸ responsible for preparing the young for the industrial life of the city: a little side-show to the factories of the town³⁹. In college, she finds herself trapped within a mechanical system. The college functions as a machine where the individuality and integrity of persons are dissipated by imposing order and authority. Ursula was further disillusioned with the learning dispensed at Nottingham: the university appears to her as a mean annexe of the industrial and commercial life of the city, and not as the anticipated temple of knowledge⁴⁰. The colliery, the college, the school were to Ursula the diverse manifestations of the same degraded civilization, corrupted by industrialization. Ursula, here also embodies Lawrence's own experience as a teacher, and his disappointments with the university.

Lawrence suggests the effects of industrialization on an individual, and how these destructive effects can be resolved through a proper position given to art and the novelist, in the modern industrial society. Thus Lawrence was concerned with the whole individual, and was shocked at what modern industrial society did to the total human being, In *The Rainbow* the people⁴¹ means for Ursula nothing positive: each one of them is a money interest, ... I hate equality on a money basis. It is the equality of dirt⁴².

Ursula was never interested in her friends who sought reform, her attitude was totally negative. The feminist activities of Winifred, Maggie were insignificant. It reminded her of chaos⁴³ and end of the world⁴⁴. The question of votes for women was unrealistic for her, since it involved submission to the automatic system⁴⁵ with its whole vast inhuman political machine. What Lawrence communicates to the reader is the intensity of his hatred of industrial society.

In *Women in Love* London was like hell to Birkin. Halliday's friends in the Pompadour had escaped from life. It was a place filled with smoke, so that he seemed to enter a vague, dream world of shadowy drinkers humming with an atmosphere of blue tobacco smoke.⁴⁶ The midland countryside defaced by the mines was like a ghoulish replica of the real world.⁴⁷ The charm of shortlands was destroyed by white and black smoke.⁴⁸ Bredalby, the country house of an earlier epoch seemed like an old painting in the twentieth century England.

Birkin, Gudrun and Ursula all suffered from the ugliness of the industrial landscape and protested against the defilement of the earth by the pitheads and the slog heaps. On the social level Gudrun and Gerald the capitalist, represented the full emotional range of a society in the first stages of the process of degeneration and decay⁴⁹. Social relationship of the Crich family with the workers varied with each individual. In his attitude towards the workers Thomas Crich was paternalistic, Mrs. Crich was patronizing and Gerald was pitiless and highly professional. The meanness and cynicism of modern industrial society is also very well displayed in the ugly industrial works of the Chatterley coal mines in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, line the rim of the forest and the manor house. Behind the sophisticated conversation of Clifford's vitiated friends was the cynicism and perversity of the industrial world.

Lawrence reacted against industrialization and longed for primitivism of the old. The expression of immense delight, at the atavistic culture and civilization of the Red Indians of New Mexico bears testimony to this longing in him. According to him the upper crust of modern civilization, prohibits one to probe deep into its merits. As he asserts we crave for experience yet we are like flies that crawl on the pure and transparent mucous-paper in which the world like a bon bon is wrapped so carefully⁵⁰. The main reason behind Lawrence's attraction to primitivism, bears testimony to Lawrence's quest for spontaneity and vitality. After his visit to New Mexico, Lawrence's disgust for modern industrial civilization was reduced to a certain extent. It certainly changed me forever⁵¹ remarked Lawrence. In appreciation of the primitive culture of the Red Indians he writes: The utter dark absorption of these naked men, as they...with their knees wide apart, suddenly, affected me with a sense of religion...I had no permanent feeling of religion till I came to Mexico and penetrated into the old human race experience there⁵².

Lawrence was at a loss to explain the causes of sensual breakdown between individuals except by pointing to its effects in the mechanicalness of industrial civilization. His hope was for a better future that would replace present conditions, the brittle corruption of houses and factories⁵³ with a whole new social order that would reflect the fulfillment of natural individual character.

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