

DEHUMANIZATION IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S *THE RAINBOW*

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The development of science led England to the industrial revolution which started, no doubt about the year 1760, but found its real climax only during the Victorian Age. This revolution brought the economic and social changes arising out of the replacement of industries carried on the homes with simple machines and by industries in factories with power driven machinery¹

An outstanding figure among twentieth century modernist writers, D.H. Lawrence is one of the dominating men of letters who produced a significant collection of novels. In fact, he was a prolific writer who devoted himself to a number of genres, e.g., novel, poetry and drama. He was a great poet, a great short story writer, a critic of insight and penetration and thus a versatile genius in many fields. His novels show that his genius matured gradually so that the critics like H.T. Moore called him "a prophet of the modern age".

D.H. Lawrence's novel, *The Rainbow* (1915), was designed as a sequel to *Women in Love*, which later on was separated into a full fledged novel. An amalgamation of symbolic narrative, "and psychoanalytic novel, the work is seen as both "Lawrence's prophetic vision of the possibility of renewal in society and a scathing critique of modern civilization."²

The Rainbow was conceived and largely written in Italy in the last few months of peace before the First World War started in 1914; Lawrence had actually planned a long novel, *The Sisters*. At the end of 1913, Lawrence wrote to his publisher Edward Garnett that he would soon be sending him 'the first half of *The Sisters*, which he would prefer to call *The Wedding Ring*. For a while, he also toyed with the idea of calling it Noah's Ark. This novel was later split into two parts and the first part was published in 1915 under its present title '*The Rainbow*'. Only a few weeks after, the publication of '*The Rainbow*', the authorities banned it

one the charge of obscenity. It had many scenes boldly dealing with sex, but their chief objection was to the scene in which the pregnant Anna Brangwen dances naked in her room.

The withdrawal of the novel was a great shock to Lawrence, who gradually developed the feeling that he no longer had a sympathetic public. After a short hearing at Bow-Street Magistrates Court on 13 November, *The Rainbow* was ordered to be destroyed. Methuen made no attempt to defend the book, only to defend themselves in Lawrence's later account of the matter, his publisher almost wept, before the magistrate..... He said he did not know the dirty thing he had been handing, he had not read the work, his reader had mistake avid him _____ and Peccav! Peccav!³

The Rainbow offers a wide range of experiences and interests. It deals with the chaining relationship between three generations from 1840 to the beginning of the 20th century. It takes up the Industrial Revolution, the collieries, the factories, the sprawling growth of villages into towns, and towns into cities, the coming of canals and railways and the appearance of the motor car. Then there is the increase in knowledge that brings with it an added awareness of one's one self. It is also accompanied by a decline of religious values, a steady diminution of the significance and meaning in the Church and a corresponding growth of scientific materialism. The novel includes in its range all these revolutionary moments that radically changed the tenor of life in England and projects its author's specific attitude towards them. Lawrence is not against the prosperity and the great scope for freedom that comes with Industrial Revolution, but he is horrified by the sprawling ugliness and appalled by the possibility of people losing the sense of their own individuality.

He is a little skeptic about the spread of education also. In the contemporary system of education, knowledge becomes a commodity and an instrument to the growth of materialism. He rejects the Christian Church, and tries to establish in its place the Church of genuine human relationships. Apart from these crucial changes taking place in the social structure, the novel deals with the problem of the relationship between work and personality; it examines the social set up of cosset hay and Bolsover, the position of the Squire and the vicar and the schoolmaster; it touches the problem of the Polish émigrés and also discusses the emancipation of women. Thus, the novel is securely rooted in the actual human, social, industrial issues of the early twentieth century England.

Lawrence also makes a powerful and deep psycho analytic study of man-woman relationship through three generations of the Brangwen family. First, it is Tom-Lydia relationship which continues through the marriage of Will and Anna, and finally, culminating, into the third generation of Ursula who-remains both a symbol and mouth piece of the novelist is philosophy of life.

Only a few miles from *The Rainbow's* real life Iekston and from the fictionalized Marsh Farm and Cossethay, lies the fictional Bestwood of *Sons and Lovers*- the real life Eastwood, in one form or another, appears in *The White Peacock*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love* *The Cost Girl*, *Aaron's Rod*, and *Lady Chatterley's lover*. *The Rainbow* begins with a farm, as does *Sons and Lovers*, but there is no connection between the farming communities.

The Rainbow's Marsh Farm is a place deliberately set apart from village or community, where life may continue in real isolation; and is not a place where we see many of the problems of actual farming. Lawrence is not interested in the problems of work as he had been in *Sons and Lovers*. He is more concerned with the place, with the family, and above all with the marriage of Tom Brangwen and the Polish women, Lydia Lensky. Lawrence's concern is not with history in its wider sense or with its political, economic and social, industrial impact upon the world at large, but with a microcosm, or little world, centered on the Brangwen farm in the Erewash Valley on the border between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. As the novel opens, Lawrence gives a beautiful description of Marsh Farm.

The Brangwens had lived for generations on the Marsh Farm, in the meadows, where the Erewash twisted sluggishly through older tress, separating Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire. Two miles away, a church tower stood on a hill near the houses of the little country town climbing assiduously up to it. Whenever one of the Brangwens in the fields lifted his head from his work, he saw the Church-tower at Iikeston in the empty sky (RBCh, 1,41).

The Rainbow also employs the central symbol of the rainbow itself, which, at the end of the novel, stands for the uncertain future and ray of hope for Ursula. Thus, the novel is an artistic exploration of the war between the sexes and the ills of modern industrial society where the religion of the blood is the final verdict given by Lawrence in favour of happy and positive things.

The story of the novel has been presented through the chronicle of three generations of Brangwen family. At the very outset of the novel, we are introduced to the first. Generation of Brangwen family, i.e., Tom and Lydia. Tom is a typical Lawrence man living for generations at the Marsah Farm located at the bank of the river Erewash at a point where the river divides the district of Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire, the town Iikeston is situated at a distance of two miles from the farm. The small village of Cosset hay was also situated near the farm. The place was a secluded one, and life here went by leisurely without any corrective influence of mechanization, materialism and industrialization.

But soon the serenity and Calmness of the Marsh Farm is destroyed when industrialization starts to hamper the spontaneous flow of life. A canal came to be dug across the farm of Brangwen connecting the newly started collier of the Erewash valley.

"About 1840, a canal was constructed across the meadows of the Marsh Farm, connecting the newly opened collieries of the Erewash valley. A high embankment travelled along then field to carry the canal, which passed close to the homestead, and, reaching the road, went over in a heavy bridge". (RB-46)

Thus, the Marsh Farm was shut off from Iikeston and enclosing it in the small valley bed, Due compensation was paid to the Brangwens for opening the canal across their farm. Soon afterward, another canal was constructed on the other side of the first canal and the village of Cossethay came pretty close the Midland railway.

We can very well visualize before one eyes in bladed coal dust covered faces of the colliers and the obnoxious smell of the sulphur. Such things vibrated in their hearts with the fact of other activity going on beyond them. (RB-16)

The growing industrialization was taking places slowly and slowly. The whole are near the Marsh Farm comes into its clutches. It silently gripped the whole area that was known for its beauty and serenely. One good effect of industrialization was that people were becoming introduced and life was becoming easy for the people. The ill-effect was also that there was always a foul and stinking smell all around and rubbish and pit-refuse was spread everywhere and there was no cleanliness and good health.

Brangwens kept themselves busy in producing supplies, they became richer and richer as time passed and attained to the stature of tradesman virtually. Although they gained richness and prosperity, but the rural solitude and privacy was disturbed by industrialization which is the root cause of dehumanization in main's life.

Cossethay remained rural still, it was the same agricultural England, but with the encroachment of industrialization nature became uglier, as houses came to be constructed on all sides as Lawrence also say in this connection:

"Although the Marsh Farm remained remote and original and somewhat retained its old characters, the effect of industrialization was also perceptible in the farm of ugly houses that were raising their heads everywhere.⁴

At the opening of *The Rainbow* (1915) the Brangwen family farm, divided from the sprawling mining village by a canal, seems to be on 'the safe side of civilization' and the male members of the family are mystically linked by a 'blood-intimacy' to the fertility of the soil they till and to that of the animals they tend. The controlling images and the reiterated metaphor of both *The Rainbow* and of its successor, *Women in Love* (1920), stress a distinction between nature and anti nature, between freedom and control, between instinct and will"⁵

The Rainbow is a social and spiritual document of great value. Lawrence was born and bred in the mining town of Eastwood in the country of Nottinghamshire. As such he had an intimate knowledge of the life in the English midlands and the changes that were taking place in that life.

As the novel opens, we are told that the house of Brangwens was situated amidst ideal surroundings beyond the reach of the encroaching civilization. It was accessible by a straight garden path, along which in spring the daffodils grew green and yellow in profusion, hiding the Farm buildings behind. On the sides of the house grew pushes of Iliac and golden rose and privet, completely hiding the Farm building from behind. At the back of house, there was a disorderly array of sheds and beyond the farthest wall lay the duck pond, abounding in white feathers along its padded earthen banks and blowing its stray soiled feathers into the grass. Tom Brangwen is the fit representative of this sturdy stock, generous, open hearted, sensuous, he is a typical Brangwen, a fit representative of the English rural folk:

"He worked and rode and drove to market, he went out with companions and got tipsy occasionally and played skittles and went to the little traveling theaters" (RB-53)

The din of the industrial activity at first astonished and perplexed the Brangwens. They were filled with a dreadful joy on listening to the whistling sound of the train and the beating of the engines at work in the colliery which was according to Lawrence, "a dreadful and destructive picture of materialism and industrialization rampant in the society."⁶ The farmers, on their way to the town and back, mingled with the blacked colliers. The wagon kept on shunting something till late in the night. The world of industry and mechanization was completely at variance with the rural world of this place.

As pointed out earlier Tom Brangwen's life was rooted in the farms. One day, quite suddenly, Lydia Lensky, the Polish widow, came into his life. He fell in love with her at once, impulsively, instinctively Marriage made a great difference to Tom Brangwen. Their married life was an alternating rhythm of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, quarrels and reconciliation. But their relationship also suffers from the impact of industrialization. During the Victorian Age, the ladies who were confined within the four walls of the house, starting coming out of their houses as a result a psychological conflict was created between men and women. Just like Thomas Hardy's novels, the role of chance and fate is dominant in the same way; Lydia is also a victim of chance and fate due to which she comes in contact with Tom. Out of all the three generations, Tom and Lydia's relationship is most successful yet they are not able to enjoy harmony which Lawrence advocates because of excessive materialisation.

Lawrence was a prophet of the blood consciousness He was naturally opposed to the entire scientific process of industrialization which has replaced the principle of life and vitality by the lifeless machines and soulless abstractions. Bitter criticism of industrial system, is therefore a recurrent theme in his novels, but it is in *The Rainbow* that it becomes most searching and comprehensive, because it is a part of radical indictment of the modern civilization. The industrial society to Lawrence is destructive. Man has been enervated, by his association with the corrupt world so her physical union with loses all its charm. In the present novel, Ursula hopes that from the decayed world of today, a new world of tomorrow would be born which would bring before her a ray of hope for future.

Lawrence's "Never in any danger of writing a reductive novel about working-class life, since what first materialized was not the class but family, neighbours, friends, places". He appreciated class relations better once he had moved away, written. *The Rainbow*, and *Woman in Love*, and lived through the experience of war. There are not so many details for a transparent biographical reading, but may belong to the raw materials from which one of Lawrence's main concern throughout his work derives: that recurrent story of "individuals who were moving out and away from their origins".⁷

The Rainbow contains in it a criticism of industrial system embodied in the colliery, and the criticism is put in the mouth of Ursula who virtually is the spokesman of Lawrence's philosophy. To the colliers, marriage and home is just a little side-show. Ursula hates the

colliery from the core of her soul; she also hates her uncle and her mistress; because "his real mistress was the machine and the real mistress of a Winifred was the machine".

In the second generation of Brangwen family, Anna, the daughter of Tom, is strongly attracted towards Will, a man of sensual nature. But in this relationship also we find the impact of industrialization. As Anna comes from a rich family, she enjoys all the luxuries of life but here she seems to be dissatisfied with Will after her marriage because he is not able to provide her all those luxuries, which results in the Oedipus complex. As a result of this, their conjugal life is not as successful as that of Tom and Lydia. In this way, Lawrence has presented the vision of modern civilization where it is at the verge of disaster as David Daiches also points out. "He soon came to feel the deadness of modern industrial civilization, with the mechanizing of personality, the corruption of the will and the dominance of sterile intellect over the authentic inward passions of men, which he saves as the inevitable accompaniment of modern life. But he has no patience with political or social panacias"⁸

Lawrence seems to convey a powerful message that industrialization causes not only dehumanization, but also stops the natural flow of instincts. Lawrence's world has got no room for promiscuity; *Brave New World* has got promiscuity as one of the first essentials of life in that world. Modern trends in thought reveal that the world will choose the way of bringing about a balanced harmony between science and spirituality. Modern civilization is quite capable of facing the crisis and the imminent danger of dissolution.

In the third generation represented by Lawrence in *The Rainbow*, we find Anton-Ursula relationship the most unsuccessful and an utter failure. Here Ursula is the perfect representative of Lawrence's hatred for mechanization.

Of all the characters in *The Rainbow*, Ursula Brangwen seeks the wholeness in her life, a perfect combination of physicality and spirituality. Her relationship with Anton is fraught with tension as he is not able to provide that kind of relationship she desires the most. At the same time, Ursula is also critical of the excessive materialism which she thinks is a big restriction in achieving the goal of life, i.e. the wholeness of self. As Lawrence himself was born and bred in the family of miners, he had made a realistic story of the mining town and the effect of industrialism on society and as it was the age of woman-emancipation, he had the convincing character of Ursula.

Ursula is first characterized through a feminist discourse which tries to exist within democratic institutions. Ursula's progression involves rejection institutions so it is domesticity, the loci of the first half of the novel, that inevitably repulses her,

'She was always in revolt against babies and muddled domesticity of course Ursula's progression represents the social changes (RB-320) that implicated woman's sexuality and the boundaries of their bodies beyond domesticity. This was the age of contraception. For the first time, women could decide whether the demands of child-bearing and rearing should control their lives and, with the job market opening to them, whether they should choose to work, instead.

Characterizing Ursula's individuation through a political discourse with Skrebensky meant that the tension between sex roles and social roles could be developed. They are both representatives of the 'political body'. Skrebensky is a character who has achieved freedom outside the domestic realm, which is what Ursula yearns for,

'His soul stood alone (RB-337)

He suggests that his self-possession comes from belonging to a place outside society, which is characterized as being natural and universal.

'I must say, the outside world was always more naturally a home to be than the Vicarage'

"Do you feel like a bird blown out of its own latitude?" 'She asked, using a phrase she had met.

He seemed more and more to give her a sense of the vast world, a sense of distances and large masses of humanity'.

The Rainbow is very much a history of family and locale, as described in some detail in chapter-2. It also emphasizes individual development but with a well-documented historical reference. The changing class positions of the Brangwens, from farm labourers to traders and to colliery manager (Tom Uncle), or technical college teacher (Will Brangwen). For the improved social and economic conditions of the family enable the daughters and Ursula in particular, to be educated into a position of greater freedom. Yet true, to her representative status as a modern woman, Ursula decides to enter the man's world the world of work. Thus, there is uprooting from the soil, and greater mobility.

Lawrence does not confine himself to observing the implications arising from industrial impact but he observes certain other changes also. Lawrence, used body symbolism to pinpoint changes in history, to universalize, not divide people's concerns: The individual female alienated from the feminized environment, reveals Lawrence's idealism of feminine behaviour as a natural Darwinian process, both generative and degenerative

Linked with the conservative Modernist's tirade against democracy and secularism, which they thought made the modern man barren and culturally rootless, was their virulent attack of industrialization and the big reducing man into a creature having only material greed's, and which devitalized him into insanity. Prominent among the English writers and critics who raised the banner of anti-industrialism were D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) and F.R. Leavis (1895-1998). Although Lawrence is better known for his philosophy of sex involving man-woman relationship, his contribution to the contemporary debate on industrial society is equally important, in fact, his literary works are only an illustration of his ideas on men and society in modern England. Note for instance, the basis for his objection to industrial society:

"The real tragedy of England as I see it, is the tragedy of ugliness." The country is so lively: the man-made England is so vile..... Century. The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness:

meanness and formless and ugly surrounding, ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers. The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread.⁹

As we find in the very beginning of the novel, *The Rainbow*, it starts with the life of rural England particularly in the midland countries around 1840, traces the advent of industrialization and its barren effects on human civilization and finally goes on to study the disintegration of life, in the early years of the twentieth century. Lawrence was born in the mining town of Eastwood in the country of Nottinghamshire; his father was a simple illiterate miner, while his mother could boast of a fine cultural heritage. He was himself gifted with a rare sensibility that could intuitively comprehend the minute changes taking place in industry and material progress which he thinks, is the root cause of all human ills.

Not only in his novels, but also in his poems Lawrence emerges to be a bitter critic of the modern civilizations as says John Burgess Wilson in the connection:

"His poems, which express with intimate knowledge of essence of natural phenomena and of the human instincts, are also capable, of bitter satire on dehumanization of the man in the twentieth century."¹⁰ There is no doubt in denying the fact that most of the human ills and miseries originate from the disintegration of sex, love and life. He considered himself destined to save man kind from the catastrophe which seemed to him imminent in the wake of large scale industrialization and mechanization of life.

When Ursula reaches the college, she is filled with an illusion that she has come to a temple of learning where the professors were holy priests of knowledge. But her vision is shattered soon when she finds them as middlemen "dispensing second-hand staff". The college is like a little laboratory or factory, where one is taught to equip himself to make more and more of money. Instead of being a religious retreat, the college is a means to a materialistic end. In this way, like his creator, D.H. Lawrence Ursula too, finds herself quite averse to the industrialization and consequent dehumanization caused by it.

Of course, the social reality was that although women went out to work, women like Winifred who questioned issues of female sexuality were few. Women still got married and were loathe questioning an issue that threatened the institution of the family, which like marriage, was fervently idealized in a destructive period which threatened the dissolution of institution. This, perhaps, is a key to the reason why *The Rainbow* was banned.

Beyond the obvious sexuality, the text voices concerns for the personal Institutions of family and marriage that Lawrence felt industrial capitalism, in its democratic stance, was breaking down to sex boundaries, and making men and women only interested in 'sensation', 'thrills', all parts of the instant gratification of materialism.

Therefore, through Winifred's collaboration with homosexual Tom in marriage, the dehumanization of the individual is finally presented as degenerate, which is an apocalyptic image of societal disorder. It is seen as growing out of the destroyed industrial environment 'subjected in slavery to that symmetric monster of the 'colliery'. Capitalism is seen as

destructive as war in its representation of environment, at last alienated by man. While comparing second and third generation, we feel that the Brangwens of the second generation have more complex souls, their reactions and responses are more subtle, the causes of conflict between them are deeper, and their frustration is bitter. The disintegration of their marriage may be said to symbolize the gradual breaking down of the traditional way of life which has been going on slowly and steadily-

Life is continued and taken up by the third generation with well marked difference. The world of Ursula and Anton is a far cry from the world of Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky. Ursula is the modern emancipated woman, who having broken free from parental authority, lives her own life in her own way. In her, the force of tradition and heredity has completely broken down. She gets higher education. She seeks fulfillment not through marriage but through pre-marital sex relationship first with Anton and then with her mistress Winifred Inger.

This breakdown of traditional values and sanctions synchronizes with an increasing mechanization of collieries, and with a subsequent dissolution of the agricultural way of life. The corruption within the souls of Tom Brangwen and Winifred is symbolized by the corruption of the industrial town, a glimpse of which has been provided to us through the colliery town of Wiggistin.

In the wake of industrialization came great social changes. The middle and working classes were most affected by industrialization, and both grew in number and social influence as did the urban area in which they worked and lived. But it was the middle class that benefited most, enjoying a rising standard of living, increased prestige, and growing political influence. Whether the working class benefited from industrialization during these early decades is a matter for debate among historians. Clearly it was this class that bore the burdens of urban social problems:

After Ursula's break with Anton, illness and abortion, she is full of despair. Her life is a blank. Then amidst the ruins of her own desolation and frustration, she sees over the corruption of the mining town, the iridescent colours of a rainbow forming in the distance. "And in its arch, she sees a possible future perfection for herself and the world; she looks ahead to some earthly Messiah, and in *Women in love*, which as a sequel completes *The Rainbow*, she meets him in the form of Birkin.

In this way, *The Rainbow* fully brings out Lawrence's hatred against the growing materialism and shows its effects on dehumanization of society by destroying the essential feelings among human relationships. Lawrence's attack on industrialization is not conducted on idealistic grounds rather it emerges from her keen sense that men and women, like birds and flowers, are physically alive and growing.

Lawrence's world is a world of lurid landscapes; troubled country sides filled with colliers a world of stumbling sad men and tortured women dropping beneath an almost unbearable sultriness. In the world of Lawrence, rainbow is a potent symbol of rebirth. Ursula sees it the same way. To her, the rainbow is a mystical piece of architecture that promises that

someday she will connect with others in hope and promise. Thus, Lawrence indicates that the rainbow is the visual objective correlative of the magical blood that, as he writes in his famous letter, will allow Ursula to be alive, to be man alive, to be, whole-man alive; that is the points.

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