

D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover - an Ecological Perspective

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Abstract: *The ecological and the environmental problems are encountered globally due to ecological imperialism. Writers with eco-concern give disturbing descriptions of degraded nature and the man's developmental greed. The fast pace of cultural, ecological and economic changes in the world provide creative silage for the literary enthusiasts, and their works lend themselves to eco-critical interpretation. It is a burgeoning academic movement that requires greater attention and emphasis in the twenty first century. As a result, environmental literature and eco-criticism have now become immensely popular in the literary world. Lawrence is identified as the first eco-feministic literary personality in Lady Chatterley's Lover. Lawrence in Lady Chatterley's Lover brings to light the dark vision of life caused by the devastating effect of the modern sophistic progress which pollutes the serene idyllic environment and the uncontaminated innocent, simple society. A man's inner being and the outer world have mutual correspondence and interdependence paving way to lead a wholesome life.. This paper explores how D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover gives a clarion call to the humanity of impending ecological disaster and the ways to lead a simple, real life.*

Key words: *economical, global, nature, progress, spiritual*

I. Introduction

The ecological and the environmental problems are encountered globally due to ecological imperialism. Writers with eco-concern give disturbing descriptions of degraded nature and the man's developmental greed. The fast pace of cultural, ecological and economic changes in the world provide creative silage for the literary enthusiasts, and their works lend themselves to eco-critical interpretation. Glotfelty defines eco-criticism as “. . . the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. . . eco-criticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (qtd. in sumathy 2-3). It is a burgeoning academic movement that requires greater attention and emphasis in the twenty first century. As a result, environmental literature and eco-criticism have now become immensely popular in the literary world.

Lawrence is identified as the first eco-feministic literary personality in Lady Chatterley's Lover. Lawrence in Lady Chatterley's Lover brings to light the dark vision of life caused by the devastating effect of the modern sophistic progress which pollutes the serene idyllic environment and the uncontaminated innocent, simple society. He seeks to establish phallic consciousness as a means to frame a harmonious relationship between an individual and the universe. A man's inner being and the outer world have mutual correspondence and interdependence paving way to lead a wholesome life. Lawrence in Lady Chatterley's Lover has thrown open the vista of the political philosophy governing the Victorian ruling class. Then it transcends the boundaries of the social self confronting the readers with the essential and simple truths of life.

Clifford, the agent of modern urbanity indulging in mining activities exploits nature to fulfill his selfish desires and thereby moves away both physically and spiritually from the appeasing nature. Nature is contaminated and spoiled by business and modern technology. He exploits both nature and Connie. The pursuit for money and power defile the very core of his existence. The materialization has punctured the real solemnity of the place and the creed of the people. He leads an unscrupulous life without caring to touch the noble core of life. Excavating the oars from the earth is symbolic of how the materialist is exploiting nature to meet his ambition. His relationship to land becomes purely economical. Clifford is literally disconnected from the earth and it is symbolically represented in his mode of locomotion as he rolls over it in a wheelchair instead of establishing a constitutional connection with the earth. His motion on a motorized chair cuts off the vital connection to the earth nullifying the possibility of gaining life energy from the soil. Lawrence subtly brings to light the devastating face of mechanization through presenting varieties of flowers being bulldozed by Clifford's motorized chair. Clifford's motor chair is emblematic of the mechanistic world of capitalist production that repels Connie with their “mechanical cleanliness and the mechanical order” (16). The scene attacks the pretensions of Clifford, a representative of mechanical world. Lawrence presents him as a representative of the sterile and efficient era of the industrial society, a perfect opposition to the world of natural vitality. Clifford exploits nature to emerge into a power monger and goes contrary to the world of naturalistic settings. He

flourishes financially but makes the productive land wane into a sterile ground. The colonizing instinct inbred in him impels to capitalize all the resources. He underestimates the importance of the nature, which includes in it the power of revelation. Aldo Leopold has rightly remarked that, "Land is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals" (qtd. in Sumathy 19).

Clifford is insensitive to the life-force that oozes from the wood. His physical paralysis only hinders the outward mobility but his mental debilitation induced by materialistic cast of mind affects his whole life. His mechanical physical activity and the lack of emotional life make him almost a creature of the modern industrial world. He schemes out profitable ways to exploit men and nature. His intent leaning towards machines deprive him the happy epiphanic realization that can be attained through oneness with nature. The ravaging of earth by Clifford symbolizes the spread of active nihilistic force. He reduces the richness and diversity of nature to satisfy his needs. He fails to understand that nature is co-inhabitant and not a subordinate.

Clifford unthinkingly depletes the natural resources. He exploits both nature and Connie, his wife. The machine culture destroys the beauty of the earth and it is a symbol of planetary industrialism. Clifford's actions explicitly reflect that natural man is dead. He is utterly insensitive and unlinked to nature as he perceives everything in the logical way of approach. The machinery spoils not only the external and physical but also the internal and spiritual growth making him grow mechanical in head and heart. Natural beauty is a source of aesthetic satisfaction and spiritual enlightenment. Without realizing that he is an incumbent part of nature, he exploits it with unrestrained greed. It has two fold effects, on the one hand, it declines man's physical and mental health and on the other, the rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources and environmental pollution. The confrontation between Clifford and Mellors, the game keeper symbolizes the struggle between the modern man and the natural man.

Lawrence traces out the bleak side of industrialization. By presenting the metaphor of a chick rotting within its egg, Lawrence hints at the decay and decline which are the consequences of industrialization: " 'It sounds like saying an egg may go as addled as it likes, so long as it keeps its shell on whole. But addled eggs do break themselves' " (211). His description of the decimated wood highlights the ravages done to the animal and vegetable life. The intrusion of the machines not only annihilates natural feelings in human beings but also roots out the blooming nature. Lawrence gives an explicit expression to his firm conviction in reanimating human life by merging with natural growth and beauty. Through the characterization of Clifford, Lawrence clearly depicts how a man falls if he moves away from true relationships and cuts short his connectivity with nature.

Connie and Mellors, on the other hand strongly believe in leading organic life. Her visit to Mellors' hut in the wood brings out a great change in their approach to life. In their union they are able to feel the vibrations of nature. The brown chickens, the first dandelions and violets open a new side of life for her. Her gradual submersion into nature and the relationship with her lover heal her tortured self. Her life which is devoid of warmth and enthusiasm blossoms into real when she is among the greeny vegetation. She identifies herself with the tossing daffodils welcoming the wind of change in her life. The bright flowers act as a morale-booster linking her with life. They exert positive influences on her and thereby renew and reconnect her with the active cosmos. The frail tender daffodils in the wood give her much needed fillip to braving the odds in her life. Nature serves to be a source of strength, gaiety and energy. She recoils from the mechanical world by taking refuge in the wood. Lawrence depicts Connie as a symbol of hope who battle against money and machine. Lawrence's faith on the emergence of new life and society, and human recovery from dreary industrialism by reliving with connection to nature is mirrored in Connie and Mellors.

A successful and happy human race becomes a pipe dream as high emphasis is laid on the profit and the machinery. The whole modern economical and sociological urban system facilitates only the functioning of the system and not the human beings. The fast-running human mind and the mind-boggling pace of technology have increased the rapidity of modern day advancements. Just cars, computers and airplanes cannot provide a salubrious atmosphere to live a wholesome life. The modern world gadgets use technology of radiations and other harmful rays that have immense influence on the environment. This leads to the imbalance of all the processes causing a great lugubrious effect on the entire world and also the eco-cycle. The agony of the present day world is the offshoot of an illogical and indiscriminate exploitation of the sources of the earth and nature by man for his meaningless material development. Lawrence points out to the evils of the age and gives a call to defeat and overcome the evils of industrialization and return to life in absolute harmony with the physical world. Establishing a nourishing relation with the cosmos will help man regain his humanity. He wishes every man to merge with the natural cycle of the universe to lead a fulfilling life. Lawrence in *Apocalypse* says, "We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body, of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremor run through our smallest veins. The moon is a great gleaming nerve-centre from which we quiver forever. . . . But it is a vital power, rippling exquisitely through us all the time" (29). The hymn dedicated to the earth in the *Atharvaveda* (Book 12, verse 11) showcases the traditional attitude of reverence:

O Mother Earth, sacred are thy hills,
Snowy mountains, and deep forests.
Be kind to us and bestow upon us happiness.
May you be fertile, arable, and nourisher of all.
May you continue supporting people of all races and nations.
May you protect us from your anger (natural disasters). And
May no one exploit and subjugate your children. (qtd. in Amaladass 38)

Earth is all an interconnected web of diversity. The natural world and social world are interdependent and essential to our lives, but successful integration still remains a great question. Lawrence has rightly pinpointed to the necessity of life in communion with natural world to lead a wholesome life. Reckless and thoughtless application of technology results in eco-degradation and pollution. Trees and forests have a special significance for deep psychological reasons. In returning to the forests, we are returning to the womb, our origin, in cosmological terms. Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a replica of real man and woman living one with the cosmos.

D. H. Lawrence, like a prophet visualizes the future of mankind and opines for a close connection to nature, for a spiritual and mental fulfillment. Lawrence wants man to act with an open mind to genuinely connect with nature and community and to experience the flow of the living earth, in and around him. The natural resources have to be left to exist in their natural state. This will become possible only if man realizes his commitment towards nature and society. Leopold in his *A Sand County Almanac* emphasizes that nature will be in full bloom only if man shifts his role from being an ardent conqueror of the land to a committed citizen of it. We should bear in mind that all species on earth are in a network of mutual contact and a harmonious "new life" and "new civilization" can be achieved by a new living state of proper personal-human-nature realization. We all need to rediscover the importance of living with a sense of the world around us. The more we can know it and understand it, the more we will sense the magnificence of life itself.

"Your deepest roots are in nature. No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of life you lead, you remain irrevocably linked with the rest of creation." Charles Cook

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