

## PRIMITIVISM IN THE NOVELS OF D.H. LAWRENCE

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### Abstract

*Primitivism is a belief in the value of what is simple and unsophisticated, expressed as a philosophy of life through art or literature. Primitivism is the distinct part of Lawrence's novels. Lawrence tries to stimulate the use of primitivism with numbness in modern industrial society, alienation reconstruction of a harmonious and natural human survival mode. This paper argues that Lawrence as a modern writer with rich creative vision return to the original spirit. Lawrence trying to respect primitivism in his works and aimed at construction the depravity of human nature and personality of the modern industrial society, reconstruction of the destroyed civilisation. Lawrence characters try to seek spaces beyond the perimeter of imperial civilisation. His major primitivist works are Women In Love and The Plumed Serpent.*

indictment of modern civilization forces his protagonists into solitude. Lawrence believes that the world is alive; and liveliness is the only thing worth-cherishing. But unfortunately, civilization and culture tend to ignore such profound realities. Somehow, the progress of civilization is not conducive to the preservation and propagation of the vital impulses of life. Crippled by reason and intellect, man comes to adopt a malign indifference towards body and instinct. Mankind, no doubt, has realized the pinnacle of culture and civilization, but sadly enough, has forgotten the free creativity of the integrated "self". Almost everything has become strictly automatic in our leveled-out civilization leading to grey totalitarianism. The ignoble death of natural and spontaneous instincts is a tragic casualty of this graceless chromium world. Civilization demands conformity. It expects man to measure up to the picture it carves out for him. Gertrude Morel, Gerald Crich, Gudrun, Sir Clifford Chatterley etc. have dehumanized themselves by identifying themselves with machine and mechanized social, religious or economic set-up. All warmth is gone entirely out of them. They are emotionally deficient or dead.

Lawrence has the tragic realization of the over pursuance of intellect at the cost of instinct. The body has become, at the best, a tool of the mind; at the worst, a toy. It has only the secondary life of a circus

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### Content

The force of Lawrence's novels lies probably in the degree of intensity with which his

dog: acting up and showing off and then collapsing. The mind itself has a stereotyped set of ideas and feelings. People, today, allow themselves to feel a certain number of finished feelings. This, at last, has killed all capacity for feeling. Today, finer emotions are strictly dead; they have to be faked. Gudrun's attempt at weeping at the death of Gerald is a tragic conclusion of the dehumanizing process of civilization. An artist like Lawrence cannot help lamenting such a tragic situation: "Never was an age more sentimental, more devoid of real feeling, than our own."<sup>1</sup> The trouble with conceited feelings is that nobody is really happy, nobody is really contented, nobody has any real peace. Under a superficial social trust, people mistrust each other. Everybody takes the other person as a menace, a threat to his very existence. "We are extremely sweet and "nice" to one another, because we merely fear one another."<sup>2</sup>

Over intellectualism with the virtual exclusion of instincts, has defeated its own purpose. It has become hopelessly self-consuming, suicidal. Modern civilization in so far as it maims the human organism, defeats the great human purpose for which he is designed. A human being like a tree, a bird, a flower is organically integrated, alive and growing. All higher possibilities depend upon the physically sound human being. And unfortunately, modern civilization is busy in cutting that very bough upon which it rests, and singing its own dirge.

Utterly displeased with the incompleteness of modern civilization, Lawrence wishes to "get back Apollo, and Attis, Demeter, Persephone and the halls of Dis."<sup>3</sup> Since whole of the civilized world is conceded to a mechanical consciousness and abstract ideals, a Lawrentian protagonist like Birkin (*Women in Love*) may go in search of virgin territory as yet uncontaminated by mechanization and undefiled by abstraction. characters attain whatever they can by their power of going back and reliving the vital processes of pre-European

civilization. Lawrence notices that such vital processes are still intact in the American Indians (*The Plumed Serpent*) and the Etruscan people (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*). These people have the ease, naturalness and spontaneity of behaviour. They do not force their mind or soul in any specified direction. Everything comes directly from the primal consciousness.

The intensity and vigour of Lawrence's condemnation of civilization is impressive. However, one must guard against being completely carried away by the occasional vehemence of Lawrence's passionate pleading for the primitive age of stark nudity and stupidity. Such a regressive step is neither feasible nor viable. Perhaps, it is this realization that makes Lawrence explore some other possibility. That's why, he confronts Birkin in *Women in Love* with two temptations: either he can accept Gerald's way of mechanical living, or else react violently against it in a purely sensual way symbolized by the African carving in Halliday's flat: "she had thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her." (WL.265) Contrary to it is the mode of purely intellectual living which "would fulfil a mystery of ice destructive knowledge, snow abstract annihilation." (WL. 266) The Africans had denied the intellect in the same way as the contemporary civilized man is denying the senses. And the outcome in both extreme cases is simply the dissolution. At last, Birkin adopts a third mode of life wherein the individual is isolate, pure and free while keeping the contact of relationship intact. This mode of life corresponds to Rousseau's third stage in the history of civilization: "... this period of the development of human faculties, holding a just mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our self-esteem, must have been the happiest and the most lasting epoch... it was the state least subject to revolutions, the best state for man."<sup>4</sup> It was the patriarchal stage of human society: family was the only government; men lived in loose, unorganized village groups, gaining their subsistence

by hunting or fishing or from the natural fruits of earth and finding their amusement from songs and dances in spontaneous gatherings.

Lawrence, actually, is a cultural primitivist who is critical not of intellect and reason as such but of their vulgar supremacy over instinct and intuition. His mission is to place body at its lawful position in the gamut of human existence in order to restore the balance, the harmony, the rhythm of life. His idea of the "new world" is suggestive of the liberation of the "self" from the iron man: "We can't go back. We can't go back to the savages: not a stride. We can be in sympathy with them. We can take a great curve in their direction onwards."<sup>5</sup> His visualization of the "new world", in Australia or Mexico is, thus, figuratively suggestive of any place where exigencies of both the human heart and mind are met with easily. Lawrence is wise enough to regard the paradise not as a finely manicured English or Mexican garden but just a state of mind: "...if you're a novelist, you know that. paradise is in the palm of your hand, and on the end of your nose, because both are alive."<sup>6</sup> Like Quatzalcoatl in *The Plumed Serpent*, Rupert Birkin in *Women in Love* also acknowledges this fact: even while he searches for the perfect place for Ursula and himself, he admits that "it isn't really a locality, ... It's a perfected relation between you and me, and others. the perfect relation."<sup>7</sup> Lawrence exhorts civilized people to lead a spontaneous life based upon intuition and instinct. It is the supple, pliable and effective way to vital living. As Lawrence identifies spontaneity most easily with the instinctual gratification, his protagonists seeking salvation, pass awakened and potent in their bodily urges, whether it be Paul and Clara or Birkin and Ursula or Mellors and Connie. The possibility of rebirth of a wholesome feeling has been grounded in sex because only at the moment of orgasm does the individual escape its self-obsession and enters into an identification with the "living cosmos". Because basic physical realities have enormous reverberations

throughout human life.

Lawrence's frankly bold treatment of sex has nothing of the Victorian prudery. And it has, quite expectedly, resulted in a charge of obscenity against him. However, Lawrence is not a voluptuary or a sensualist, because sex for him is not the be-all and end-all of human existence. It is rather one of many aspects of life. It has got the driver's seat in Lawrence's writings just because in modern life, it has been pushed on the back-seat, rather out of the carriage. Lawrence's aim is to strike a balance between the consciousness of the act (sexual) and the act itself: "It means being able to use the so-called obscene words, because they are a natural part of the mind's consciousness of the body. Obscenity only comes in when the mind despises and fears the body, and the body hates and resists the mind."<sup>8</sup> Actually it is the mind modern man has to liberate, to civilize on these points. And Lawrence makes a sincere effort by putting forth his novels, in spite of all antagonism, as honest, healthy books of life, necessary for mankind today.

Lawrence's purpose is to restore the harmony of human relationships by making sex valid and precious; but not shameful. Given his intention, he could quite authoritatively claim that "anybody who calls my novel a dirty sexual novel is a liar" and "It'll infuriate mean people; but it will surely soothe decent ones."<sup>9</sup> Really, Lawrence is out to shun all the artificialities and formalities which have gathered around the institutionalized morality. He may well be called a "moral terrorist" (Kant's term) struggling for be called propagating a mode of morality that is genuine and secular. As Father Tiverton observes: "I should claim that one of the great virtues of Lawrence was his sense of the isness rather than the oughtness of religion ... he believed in his dark gods not because they 'worked' but because they were true."<sup>10</sup>

According to T.S. Eliot: "The artist is more primitive, as well as more civilized than his contemporaries.... The pre-logical mentality persists

in civilized man, but becomes available only to or through the poet."<sup>11</sup> A work of art, however, does not put forward any concrete proposals for change. Rather, it merely produces an awareness which is to be regarded as the pre-condition for an ultimate break in society's omnipotence. The experimental use of aesthetic form keeps words, sounds, shapes and colours free for a new dimension of existence. Such and many more generalizations are supply applicable to Lawrence's art. In his unbeatable style, Lawrence appeals to the "beast" in man. His art is an affirmation of life-values as against the mechanization of human nature.

Lawrence, actually, is an apostle of revitalized normality. Like most philosophers and founders of religions, his is the message of balance in life. His is an inspired plea to become what man is supposed to be - a living "being". The "living" means the life of a completely realized "self" - the "self" that realizes its own powers rather than seeking power or submitting to it. Lawrence's is a quest for an orderly way of life based on the principle of checks and balances, which is conducive to happiness. Body and mind, instinct and intellect, nature and culture- all should be in a living harmony. And this is, after all, the beginning of true democracy, as it is of true marriage, because it is marked by total integration; and therefore, makes possible only the creative spontaneity. In this way, Lawrence, the artist, settles into that paradise which knows what freedom is, or at least, where it begins. This is the paradise which is allowed to human beings when they recognize that the value of life exists in the art of living. And fairly asserts Tennessee Williams that Lawrence's all "work is probably the greatest modern monument to the dark roots of creation,"<sup>12</sup>

Of many heirs to Dionysus, none draws on the Nietzschean matrix with greater force and originality than Lawrence. Nietzschean dialectics opposes "civilization" to "culture", and "taming" to

"training". Civilization is decadent and repressive because it depends on taming the "beast" in man. A genuine culture would be the process of developing "higher men". Nietzschean Superman and Lawrence's Sons of God are such higher men whose intellectual and spiritual qualities grow directly out of their disciplined but untamed instincts. We can aver that Lawrence is optimistic about the change in the contemporary mode of civilization that will make it conducive to human aspirations. Even if art "cannot change the world... it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world."<sup>13</sup> And herein lies the true significance of Lawrence, the Cultural Primitivist.

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- <sup>2</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "A *Propos*", Phoenix II, 513.
- <sup>3</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "A *Propos*", Phoenix II, 511.
- <sup>4</sup>Rousseau, quoted in A.O. Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1948) 30.
- <sup>5</sup>D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classical American Literature* (New York: Viking Press, 1964) 137.
- <sup>6</sup>D.H. Lawrence, *Select Literary Criticism*, ed. Anthony Beal (New York: np., 1966) 176-77.
- <sup>7</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "A *Propos*", Phoenix II, 490.
- <sup>8</sup>D.H. Lawrence, quoted in Mark Schorer, *Modern British Fiction: Essays in Criticism*, (New York: Oxford Uni. Press, 1961) 305. Hereafter cited as MBF.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>Father Tiverton, quoted in Mark Schorer, MBF, 297.
- <sup>11</sup>T.S. Eliot, quoted in Wallek Rané and Warren Austin, *Theory of Literature* (1949; rpt. Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1985) 84.

<sup>12</sup>Tennessee Williams, quoted in George Hendrick, "10" and the Phoenix, D.H. Lawrence Review, 2 (1969) 164.

<sup>13</sup>Herbert Marcuse, quoted in Y.P. Dhawan, *English Literature and Indian Sensibility*, The\_Tribune [Chandigarh] 14 June 1998.

Algebra is a discipline within the field of mathematics that focuses on the study of relations, operations, and their constructions. It serves as a fundamental component of mathematics and exhibits a wide range of practical applications in our daily existence. In addition to its inherent importance as a fundamental discipline within mathematics,

