

Man-Woman Relationship in D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

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A complete study of the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* depicts Lawrence's views on complete freedom of expression on all human experiences and relationships particularly in sexual matters. In the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence argues about individual regeneration which can be found only through relationship between man and woman. Love and personal relationships are the threads that bind this novel together. Lawrence explores a wide range of different types of relationships, the void in the relationship between Clifford Chatterley and his wife Constance Chatterley which is due to the sexual frustration of Lady Chatterley. She realises that she cannot live with mind alone, she must also be alive physically. The novel depicts a series of relationships, the brutal relationship between Mellors and his wife Bertha, the Perverse, maternal relationship that develops between Clifford and Mrs Botton, his caring nurse and finally the relationship between Mellors and Lady Chatterley that builds very slowly and is based upon tenderness, physical passion and mutual respect.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is, undoubtedly, one of the most famous of Lawrence's books. It is a simple and perfect affirmation of life according to Lawrentian principles. The main subject of the novel is not just the evident sensual content but it is the search for integrity and wholeness. It focuses on the incoherence of living a life that is 'all mind', which Lawrence saw as particularly true among the members of the aristocratic classes. The contrast between mind and body can be seen in the dissatisfaction each has with their previous relationships. Constance's lack of intimacy with her husband who is 'all mind' and Mellor's choice to live apart from his wife because of her 'brutish' sexual nature.

Besides, the evident sexual content of the novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* also presents some views on British Social Context of the early 20th century. For example, Constance social insecurity arising from being brought up in an upper- middle class background in contact with Sir Clifford's Social self-assurance. There are also signs of dissatisfaction and resentment of Tevershall Coal pit's workers, the colliers against Clifford who owned the mines. The most obvious social contrast in the plot is, however that of the affair of an aristocratic woman (Connie) with a working class man (Mellors).

Relationship between Sir Clifford Chatterley and Constance Chatterley:

Constance meets and marries Chatterley when she returns home from abroad at the outbreak of the First World War. Clifford is a son of a baronet and a member of a Smart Cambridge set. After their honeymoon, he goes back to war, only to return a few months later paralysed and impotent. He becomes a successful writer. In all that he does, Connie is very close to him in mind, although bodily they are non-existent to one another. It is purely a mental life that they share. The gap between them grows wider. Clifford is

obsessed with financial success and fame, he is not truly interested in love and Connie feels that he has become passionless and empty.

One finds Connie's growing awareness of dissatisfaction with her way of life. *"Connie and Clifford had now been nearly two years at Wragby, living their vague life of absorption in Clifford and his work. They talked and wrestled in the throes of composition and felt as if something were happening, really happening, really in the void."*

And thus far it was life: in a void." (Lawrence: 1928)

Connie is not at ease with the emptiness and lack of substance in her life. There is a complex tension, skilfully expressed, in Connie's predicament; on one hand we perceive the lack of reality in her mode of existence, a vacuum, a 'void' needing to be filled; on the other, we enter her consciousness and experience her life as a dream, an unawakened trance-like state that registers dissatisfaction but is fearful of change. Clifford's view of sex is something mechanical, devoid of emotion and loyalty. For him, it is a simple function to be arranged like going to a dentist. This attitude is reflected in the following passage, where he suggests that Connie might have a child by another man to maintain the Chatterley inheritance at Wragby.

"I'm sorry we can't have a son", she said. He looked at her steadily with his full, pale-blue eyes."

"It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man", he said. 'If we brought it up at Wragby, it would belong to us and to the place. I don't believe very intensely in fatherhood. If we had the child to rear, it would be our own. Don't you think it's worth considering?'"

Connie looked up at him at last. The child, her child was just an 'it' to him. It—It—It'. 'But what about the other man?', she asked. 'Does it matter very much?'. You had lovers in Germany, what is it now?. Nothing almost. They pass away..... It's what endues through one's life that matters; my own life matters to me, in its long continuance and development. You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit of each other.....'. Connie sat and listened in a sort of wonder and a sort of fear. She did not know if he was right or not." (Lawrence: 1928)

Connie remains unconvinced and rather disturbed. There is a tension between the bland reasonableness of his proposal and her confused, emotional response. It is understandable that Connie should waver, because there is no doubt that Clifford is good with words. He is persuasive and superficially at least, there is lot of sense in what he says. Clifford has a real point, we feel when he states that the basis of marriage lies in close habituation rather than vicissitudes of sexual desire. It is only when we see these remarks in their full context that Clifford's inhumanity and frozen incapacity for feelings become apparent. A child for Clifford is an 'it', a possession to be owned by a place. It is to be 'Wragby's child', not a part of an intimate family bond.

Clifford's relationship to Connie is like that of a tutor to pupil, Clifford wants to dominate Connie intellectually.

By living with Clifford, she is caught up, captured in a web of words, his words. It is a thought dominated world without real meaning, there is no touch, no contact. The relationship between Clifford and Connie is a good example of how Connie is caught in the web of words and is instinctively struggling to escape. Lawrence gives her a passive listening role but there is enough in her response to suggest her powers of resistance and a capacity for change.

Constance (Connie) and Mellors:

Constance's (Connie's) lack of intimacy with her husband who is 'all mind' and Mellors estrangement with his wife lead them into a relationship that builds very slowly and is based upon tenderness, physical passion and mutual respect. Connie's sexual frustration is also one of the reasons for leading her into an affair with the game keeper Oliver Mellors.

Oliver Mellors, the game keeper at Wragby is aloof, sarcastic, intelligent and noble. He belongs to the working class but joined the army, where he rose to become a commissioned lieutenant. He was in fact finely educated in his childhood, is an extensive reader and can speak English like a gentleman, but chooses to behave like a Commoner and speak broad Derbyshire dialect, probably in an attempt to fit in his own community.

The relationship of Connie and Mellors is in fact an outgrowth of the dualistic conception of the vital self that Lawrence formulates. Connie meets Mellors for the first time when Clifford's mechanical wheel chair breaks down in the park and Mellors is summoned to help. At this juncture, Connie does not have any feelings for Mellors. For the second time, when she goes to his cottage to deliver Clifford's message, she gets a shock when she saw him bathing.

"Connie had received the shock of vision in her wombVulgar privacies." (Lawrence: 1928)

Connie is surprised by the extra ordinary uniqueness of the experience before class and social prejudices seek to diminish and resist it. The encounter leaves an effect on Connie. She has been startled into an apprehension of the physical, the splendour and distinctive individual of human body. The effect on her is also physical, she feels it in her 'womb'.

Later Connie shows herself to be split in her consciousness. Her body reacts instinctively to the experience, but her mind rebels, it seeks to assert its control. This is perhaps due to social prejudices; the man belongs to working class. The effect on Connie is due to the extreme contrast between Clifford and Mellors. Clifford is presented as a 'talking head'. Talk is his distinguishing feature and he is presented through his language,

in particular his passion for gossip, intellectual discussion and abstract debate. His world is mental world, it is a remote, second hand world that Connie is desperate to escape, because she is starved of contact and touch. Mellors in contrast is physically presented. He lives in woods with other living things of the body and the possibility to touch. It is but natural that Connie who is deprived of physical touch, gets into a physical relationship with Mellors and for the first time she realises that she had consciously and definitely hated Clifford. This is evident from the passage when the two help Clifford with his wheel chair.

“Are you sure you’ve not hurt yourself ?, she said fiercely. He shook his head. She looked at his smallish, short alive hands. It was the hand that caressed her Now I’ve hated him, I shall never be able to go on living with him, came the thought into her mind.” (Lawrence: 1928)

This episode is very important and because it brings Connie to her moment of choice between the two men. The tension lies within Connie herself, between her care and concern for Mellors and her hatred of her husband. She realises that they stand for quite different systems of value and opposing ways of life. Compromise is impossible. Before meeting Mellors, Connie was depicted as a drowsy, lethargic figure, walking through the part in a trance-like state of unreality. After meeting Mellors, she is alive and has brought her to life. Connie wants to ‘clutch’ his hand, her soul sweeps towards him.

Connie examines herself and her feelings as a consequence of her love for Mellors. The mutual antagonism of the two men is total and elemental, life fire and water. She sees the impossibility of splitting the role of husband from that of father of her child. Her feelings for Clifford have a new realism and honesty. There is no attempt to be ‘fair’ to Clifford, no reason for pity. Another episode which depicts Connie’s full development occurs on Connie’s return from Venice, pregnant with Mellors child. She sees him in London and convinces him that they can have a future together. In this scene, the tension is resolved between Mellor’s uncertainty, his fear of life’s demands and responsibilities and Connie’s courage, her commitment to the future exemplified in her unborn child.

Connie’s relationship with Mellors is so transforming that she comes to reject her old way of life and everything her husband represents. Mellors had given her an exquisite pleasure and a sense of freedom and life.

Constance – Mellors relationship is an illustration of achieved wholeness of being in which both partners are fulfilled.

Relationship between Clifford and Mrs. Botton:

Mrs. Botton (Ivy Botton), is Clifford’s nurse and caretaker. She is competent, still attractive middle-aged woman. Years before, her husband died in an accident in the mine owned by Clifford family. Mrs. Botton resents Clifford as the owner of the mines – and in a sense, the murderer of her husband – she still maintains a worshipful attitude towards him as a representative of the upper class.

The deterioration of Connie's health and the pressure from her family forces Clifford to hire a nurse, Mrs. Botton, to look after him. Clifford becomes more and more dependent on Mrs. Botton as a menial and confidante. Mrs. Botton diverts Clifford Chatterley on her arrival at Wragby her 'talk Tevershall' or by gossiping about local affairs. Clifford is 'intrigued', in fact Mrs. Botton becomes his window on the world beyond the gates of Wragby Hall. He gets information for his stories from her and it is through her influence that he takes a fresh interest in his mines and is determined to update their technology and improve their productivity. She takes more and more the place of Connie in Clifford's life. She supplies a stimulus to Clifford, where Connie has failed and her stories of Colliers and the Collieries turn Clifford's mind away from his introspective writing towards the practical problems of reorganising the mines from which he draws his wealth. Clifford has a perverse relationship with Mrs. Botton – It is one of the most complex relationship in the novel, she simultaneously adores and despises him, while he depends and looks down on her.

Conclusion:

In 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', the relationship between men and women seems to resemble to the relationship between men and machines. Not only do men and women require an appreciating the sexual and sensual in order to relate to each other properly, they require it even to live happily in the world, as being able to maintain human dignity and individuality in the dehumanising atmosphere created by modern greed.

The novel dramatises two opposed orientations towards life, two distinct modes of human awareness, the one abstract, cerebral and unvital and the other concrete, physical and organic.

Sir Clifford Chatterley represents a modern intellectual man from ruling class. In contrast, the gamekeeper Oliver Mellors, represent the organic way of life. The novel also portrays contrast between the two relationships – the Constance – Mellors and Constance – Clifford relationships. One is the union of physical consciousness, the other of mental consciousness, one succeeds, the other fails. The two opposing ways of life are summarised in the attitudes, behaviour and way of life of Clifford and Mellors. Clifford leads a mental life at the expense of physical one. For him, words are a substitute for living. He inhabits a social world which is seen as alienating, insensitive, class-conscious and manipulative. The consequences of this way of life affect Connie's health. Mellors, on the other hand, strives for harmony between the mental and physical life, and a vital interaction between words and deeds.

Mellors is a symbolic figure – the preserver of natural life, the bringer of fulfilment to a woman and an adversary of the mechanical world. On the other hand, Sir Clifford is too much a symbol, a representative of mechanical world. Connie is an oddly colourless character, partly because she has to bear the symbolic weight of being every woman. Despite her obvious intelligence, one tends to think of her as 'just a young female creature'. The novel portrays Connie's maturation as a woman and as a sensual being. She comes to, despise her weak, ineffectual husband and to love Oliver Mellors, the game keeper on her husband's estate. In the process of leaving her husband and

conceiving a child with Mellors, Lady Chatterley moves from heartless, bloodless world of intelligence and aristocracy into a vital and profound connection rooted in sensuality and sexual fulfilment.

Works Cited:

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