

CHAPTER - II

***D. H. LAWRENCE'S LIFE,
WORKS AND CRITICISM***

2 D. H. Lawrence's Life, Works and Criticism

2.1 LIFE :

David Herbert Lawrence was born on 11th September, 1885, at Eastwood. He was the fourth child of a miner. His village was eight miles North-West of Nottingham. Coal had been mined in the district for centuries but until about forty years before Lawrence's birth the process was still practically medieval. The miners lived in a thatched cottages and worked their small mines in the hillsides. About 1850, the scene was transformed by the arrival of the capitalists and the railways.

The miners were still, in a way, an accident in the landscape, and Eastwood, itself remained a village rather than a town. It stood in a fine position on a hill-top and most of the houses looked out over open country. The miners walked through the fields to work; and there seems to have been little threat of unemployment. His father, as a young man could earn up to £5. According to Lawrence, the miners lived an almost purely instinctive life, developing a sense of intimacy and comradeship. There was a conflict between his own parents that had a decisive effect on his life. His father was almost illiterate, while his mother was a woman of some education and refinement and she determined that her sons should be better themselves.

He attended Nottingham High-School from 1898 to 1901 and worked as a student teacher from 1902 to 1906. He entered Nottingham University College in September 1906 for a two-years course. According to him, no amount of physical instinctive life alone can produce novels. As a youngman, he saw things very much with his mother's eyes but the longer he lived the more he came to sympathise with his father.

His novels are not only his spiritual autobiography, they also record in detail the actual physical surroundings and events of his life, and there are very few of his friends, who donot appear in his fiction in one form or another. Not unnaturally, many of these people published their reminiscences and impressions of Lawrence after his death but these books are inevitably about the man himself. From some of them, one would rarely gather that Lawrence was a writer.

It is important to stress at the outset that he was not just a wonderful man, or difficult

man or at times perhaps a mad man, not just a preacher, or a prophet, or an advocate or social and sexual reform, but above all, a great writer. Here, we are connected with his writing, and his life is important only as it is connected in his work.

2.2 WORKS :

Lawrence attracted an enormous amount of commentary during his life. After the suppression of '*The Rainbow*' in 1915, he rapidly acquired a certain notoreity to which he responded by being a defiant and often contemptous of his critics. In spite of the heat generated some interesting and perceptive criticism was produced: few of his books were actually ignored. And although he was not a fovourite among literary circles - after his initial discovery by Ford Modox Ford, most prominant critic commented on some or other of his works. Controversy continues about him; but in the main it is about which of the two conspicuous elements in him is the more important the artist or the prophet. His significance itself is no longer debate. Yet as a poet and novelist he has no imitators, as prophet no successors. And that also is significant.

2.2.1 NOVELS

<u>The White Peacock</u>	-	(1911)
<u>The Trespasser</u>	-	(1912)
<u>Sons and Lovers</u>	-	(1913)
<u>The Rainbow</u>	-	(1915)
<u>The Lost Girl</u>	-	(1920)
<u>Women In Love</u>	-	(1920)
<u>Sea and Sardinia</u>	-	(1921)
<u>Aaron's Rod</u>	-	(1922)
<u>Kangaroo</u>	-	(1923)
<u>The Boy In the Bush</u>	-	(1929)
<u>The Plumed Serpent</u>	-	(1926)
<u>Lady Chatterley's Lover</u>	-	(1928)

2.2.2 POEMS

"Talk"

"Discreet in Childhood"

"Love on the Farm"

"Last Lesson of the Afternoon"

"Kangaroo"

"Snake"

"The Mosquito"

"Bat"

"The Blue Jay"

"Bavarian Gentians"

"The Ship of the Death"

"Difficult Death"

"All Souls' Day"

"Death"

"Two ways of Living and Dying"

"Beware the Unhappy Dead"

2.2.3 TRAVEL BOOKS

Twilight in Italy

Sea and Sardinia

Mornings in Mexico

Etruscan Place

2.2.4 PLAYS

The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd

Touch and Go

David

A Collier's Friday Night

2.2.5 MISCELLANEOUS

Movements in European History

Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious

Fantasia of the Unconscious

Studies in Classic American Literature

Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine

Pornography and Obscenity

Assorted Articles

Apocalypse

2.2.6 SHORT STORIES

The Prussian Officer and other stories

England, my England and other stories.

The Ladybird, The Fox, The Captain's Doll

St. Mawr, together with The Princess.

The Woman who Rode Away and Other Stories

The Man who Died

The Virgin and the Gipsy and Other Stories

Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories

The Lovely Lady and other stories

2.3 CRITICISM :

2.3.1 NOVELS

W. T. Andrews, solemnly accepts in his book, Critics on D. H. Lawrence (1971 : 41) that it is impossible to write about Lawrence except as an artist, an artist first of all, and the fact of his being an artist explains a life which seems, if inexplicably strange.

The White Peacock

Through this first novel, he presented himself before the readers as a talented young man, acutely observant of nature and delighting in it.

It is the country side of youth that is describing. It is a countryside, seen by a countryman who passionately loves it but at the same time has no illusions about it. It is the book of a literary young man with a feeling for nature who is groping his way among the complexities of

human characters. The story of George is an ineffective tragedy.

George Saxton is a young farmer, handsome, able-bodied. He has for neighbours, a cultural family of higher social status who are on friendly terms with the Saxtons. Letty, the daughter, is a full fledged flirt fascinating and consciencless, with just enough passion in her to make her flirtation, dangerous. She turns George's head and makes violent love to him. It is the tale of several families bicentrally revolving round two young men who are full of passions.

It has great merits and faults that must be found in the work of a young writer.

The Trespasser

The theme of the novel is failure of contact, lack of warmth between people. It has a classical unity and conciseness which emphasize the tautness of the emotion, involved. The main action concerns two people only and take place over a period of five days in one place. The Theme is very simple, the passion of the married man Siegmund for the enigmatic girl, Helena, its fruition in a few days or union, and then an enforced seperation, followed by Siegmund, obsession of suicidal despair and death. Certainly, this novel is not tobe classed 'among popular novels', but the discerning reader should treasure it for those temperamental qualities which characterize original work. In other words, the novel is a remarkable study of a tragic theme, enveloping it, however, in an ironical rather than in a tragic atmosphere. It is a morbid tale evidently written at a white heat of inspiration and with the usual faults.

Sons and Lovers

It is the story of his own early life, a story so rich in material that one is grateful that Lawrence didnot attempt it as his first book, but walked until he had attained greater mastery of his medium. This novel immediately, put him amongst the leading novelists of his day. The story starts with Mr. and Mrs, Morel of the book. The first part of the book is a brilliant realistic picture of working - class life of childhood games and illness and festivities, of making do on very little money. And although the family is overshadowed by the split between father and mother, there are still times of great happiness.

"Home was home and they lived it with a passion of love, whatever the suffering they had." (Lawrence : 1913 : 25)

It is usually supposed that with '*Sons and Lovers*' Lawrence arrived as a major novelist (Anthony Beal : 1961 : 11)

The Rainbow

It is the complete original book. It goes very deep, so deep that previous ideas of 'Character' in fiction donot apply because Lawrence is dealing not so much with individuals as with humanity. So while, '*Sons and Lovers* tells the story of one individual growing up, *The Rainbow* offers no such clear cut story but develops instead its theme of men and women constantly entering new circles of existence and experience between birth and death. While most of *The Rainbow* deals with the spiritual rather than the social, history of England, the story of Ursula's teaching days is a detailed picture of what an elementary school was like at the beginning of this century.

The novel ends : on a note of optimism, with Ursula's vision of the rainbow, symbolizing the earth's new architecture, a change of heart. Not only the main character of the story but Lawrence himself had passed through one phase of life and was faced with an unknown future. In all the persons of the story, the passion of sex is so manifested as to eclipse all other passions and thoughts and it is handled, described, embroidered, glorified with enormous zest and skill. (Anthony Beal : 1961 : 12)

Women In Love

While *The Rainbow* is a novel of roots and show organic growth and life, *Women In Love* is a book of upheaval, escape or coming to the end of things, of death. 'This book answers the criticism that Lawrence had no sense of form, for only a great architectonic intelligence could comprehend so much of life and present it in one novel with such economy vividness and brilliance of motivation.' (Anthony Beal : 1961 : 13) World appears in various guises in this novel. It is the most powerful work. It is a sequel to '*The Rainbow*, in that it carries on the story of Ursula, of the family of Brangwen. Here, the characters are the two young men and women whose chief interest for them is in amatory relations. This is indicated by the title of the novel. The erotic relation of the people, though a tremendous part of life as all the great tragic romances prove, are still, only part of life. Nobody knows better than Lawrence.' He is a lyric as well as a tragic poet. (Anthony Beal : 1961 : 13)

The Lost Girl

It is something of a sport, in every sense of the word. It is meant to be comic but not satiric. The early part of the book is entirely comic, in places, even facetious, with the characters. In this novel, the quite different world of the middle class is presented. *The Lost Girl* stands alone amongst the novels because it is the only one in which Lawrence is not to a greater or lesser degree, propounding or working out his own problems. His deepest feelings and experiences are not engaged.

Kangaroo

In the next novel, *'Kangaroo*, the setting is in Australia. It is one of his most ambitious attempts at creating a male character who is not at all like Lawrence himself. We know that no such man and no such movement existed in Australia at the time. Both were invented by Lawrence himself as dramatisations of the sort of political leader and movement with which he might usefully work. It contains some of his most natural brilliant descriptions, pictures of small towns, of Sydney Harbour of the Pacific coast, of the bush. These have the freshness and lyricism reminiscent of *The White Peacock*.

Lady Chatterley's Lover

It is undoubtedly the most generally known of Lawrence's books, but it owes its fame to its history or legal repression rather than to its intrinsic merits. It was ironic, therefore, that it should be the first novel to be prosecuted under the new act. The plot of this novel is very simple, that Constance Chatterley who had married her husband without any physical inclination, and who after the War, continued to live with him although he was half-paralysed, thus, gradually drying up in the spring, of her life, suddenly fell in love with her husband's keeper, Oliver Mellors and with him came to realize the 'Old Adam and Eve's were the most important things in life. Mellors, as is well-known, stands for Lawrence himself. His is not only a reflection of Lawrence's own sexual life, but his views are of Lawrence's.

2.3.2 LAWRENCE'S POETRY

"V. de S. Pinto, has described D. H. Lawrence as a poet without a mask" quotes Mark Spilka in his book : *D. H. Lawrence : A Collection of Critical Essays* (1963 :127)

He further quotes : "Nearly all the famous poet of the past have worn a mask of some sort. Of course, all poets drop the mask occasionally, for a line or two or perhaps the whole poem". (1963 : 127)

He again quotes : 'R. P. Blackmur in his essay on *Lawrence and Expressive form* in his book *Language as Gesture* (1954) makes a carefully reasoned attack on Lawrence's poetry exactly, because it is poetry without a mask.' (1963 : 127)

'Blackmur's essay', is an important piece of criticism. His main contention is that Lawrence's poetry, in spite of certain great qualities which he admits that it possesses, is vitiated by what he calls 'the fallacy of the faith' in expressive form. (1963 : 127)

Lawrence's Introduction to the American edition of his *New poems* though written in rather florid style, is a much clearer and more mature statement of his poetic theory than the rather crudely phrased letter to Marsh' (1963 : 129)

Anthony Beal, in his book *D. H. Lawrence* (1961 : 104) observes that Lawrence's poems fall very roughly into three categories satirical and comic poems, poems about human relations and emotions and poems about human nature. The satirical and comic poems are the least important. They have no exigrammatic form but the informal air of conversation or of a sides in letters. The second category spells out his autobiography again.

"Discord in Childhood", "Love on the form", "Last Words to Mriam", "Last Lesson of the Afternoon" shows how closely these poems are bound up with the early life and novels. 'What distinguishes Lawrence as a poet is the immediacy of his perceptions, and the reason for the comparative failure of his 'emotional' poems is that human relations and feeling cannot be immediately apprehended in all their richness and complexit. (1961 : 105)

'Where his poetry comes into its own, where it transcends his prose, is in the poems about flowers and animals and bird. (1961 : 106)

2.3.3 TRAVEL BOOKS

According to Antony Beal (*D. H. Lawrence* : 1961 : 102) going on a journey always brought out the best in Lawrence, and the happiest of his travel books, *Sea and Sardinia* is nearly all journeying. It is the account of a trip that he and Frieda made in 1921 from Sicily to Sardinia,

across to Italy, and back to Sicily. It was a very ordinary trip, and they had no adventures. 'The people he set with in trains, and buses the officials, the guests at the inns, are all touched with a little of his own magic.'

In *Twilight in Italy* there is less actual travelling and also less cheerfulness 'There is the same convincing evocation of the spirit of the place and the some penetration into the lives of the people, but not the some spontaneous gaiety'. (Anthony Beal : *D. H. Lawrence* : 1961 : 103) *Etruscan places* is a journey to the past. He was fascinated by the Etruscan, that mysterious people living in central Italy, who were destroyed by the Romans, leaving little but their burial places for archaeologists to probe. *Mornings in Mexico* is a journey to the primitive, for the life Lawrence describes there is far more primitive in many ways than that of the long-vanished Etruscans.

2.3.4 PLAYS

In 1913, D. H. Lawrence spoke of his plays as relaxation from the more arduous work of novel writing'. (Mark Spilka : *D. H. Lawrence : Critical Essays* : 1963 : 142) Although he wrote seven plays and a fragment, he didn't take his dramatic work very seriously, and when two of his plays were given stage performances, he didn't bother to see them. His knowledge of the drama was fairly well limited to texts rather than the stage performances. His plays are important, however, in their relationship to Lawrence's other work, as they do reflect and sometimes severely qualify the themes of his other forms. They reflect a trait of Lawrence's character which has been often overlooked. As Richard Aldington says, "Lawrence would not have been Lawrence if he had come at once to a clear decision and had acted upon it without hesitation." (Mark Spilka : 1963 : 143) The magnificence of Lawrence lies partly in this continuous qualification as abstractions are tested against the reality of art and life. The plays of D.H. Lawrence show this qualification in dramatic action.

2.3.5 SHORT STORIES

Mark Spilka, quotes in *D. H. Lawrence : Critical Essays* : (1963 : 93) 'Lawrence's short stories are a special and sustained achievement belonging roughly to the last decade of his life. "Not only he wrote an enormous amount in the brief twenty years of his career, he also wrote

in a variety of forms unrivalled by any other English writer" (Anthony Beal : *D. H. Lawrence* 1961 : 98) Social observation almost inevitably involves satire, irony, humour and wit and even cruelty and these are the characteristics of features of many of the stories. Many were written about friends and acquaintance of Lawrence.

D.H. Lawrence's short stories being topic for dissertation, the analysis of each of his stories has been dealt with in chapter no. III onwards.

