

Chapter VII

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER

In a letter to Willard Johnson, an American journalist, Lawrence wrote :

“God enters from below” said the Egyptians, and that’s right. Why can’t you darken your minds, and know that the great gods pulse in the dark and enter you as darkness through the lower gates. Not through the head. Why don’t you seek again the unknown and invisible gods who step sometimes into your arteries, and down the blood vessels to the phallus, to the vagina, and have strange meeting there ? (Lawrence : *Letters*, 726).

D.H.Lawrence had this radical but religious idea of “the phallic reality’ (*Lett* : 1046) at the back of his mind when he began *Lady Chatterley's Lover* sometime between 9 September and 30 October 1926. On 9 September, he was “still feeling dead of writing altogether”(*Letters* : 936), and on 30 October, as we heard from Frieda : “Lawrence goes into the woods to write, he is writing a short-long story, always breaking new ground ---- no I don’t explain it well, the animal part” (*Letters* : 944). This ‘short-long story’ was probably the first draft of the novel published by some of his enthusiastic friends in 1944 under the title *The First Lady Chatterley*. Lawrence wrote the novel for three times. *The First Lady Chatterley* had been relatively short, dark and above all a rough sketch written under the impression of recently experienced English gloom. The second version, written after his Etruscan adventure, was much longer, and the final one was of the same length but “there is a sharpening of intellectual issues and a deepening of pathos” (*Schorer, M.* : 1961, p.146) in it. The gamekeeper Parkin of the previous two versions was renamed as Oliver Mellors in the final version. Here Lawrence introduced the character of Michaelis, a successful trivial playwright, to put Constance Chatterley at the very centre of the full emptiness of the socio-intellectual world. As a result, the final

version became, 'a novel in a solid and sustained social context, with a clear and happily developed plot, in which characters function fully and the author allows them to speak for themselves' (Schorer, M. : 1961, 145). Unlike some of his tentative masterpieces, the present novel was Lawrence's product of confidence and a shock-therapy to the bewildered intellectuals. He said : "I feel I've shot it like a bomb against all their false sex and hypocrisy --- against all their a-sexual sexuality' (*Letters*, 1077). A Florentine critic, having realized such a desperate attempt by Lawrence at this novel, cautioned him with a comment : 'I don't know - I don't know if it's not a bit too strong --- Listen Singnor Lawrence, you find it really necessary to say it ?" (Lawrence : *A Propos* --- 126). Lawrence's characteristic response to him was : 'I told him I did' (*A Propos* --- 126). The reason behind this curt but firm remark lies perhaps in his apprehension that the malady of modern civilization developed due to the suppression and misunderstanding of true sex. In the present novel, Lawrence successfully brought sexuality from its long-drawn linguistic extrapment into the clear light of language. He tried to regain for sex a "full truth as a process of nature, a truth which has long been lingering in the shadows and hiding under various disguises' (Widdowson, P.; 1992,121). Like Foucault, Lawrence "has shifted from a vocabulary centering on the *episteme*, a discursive concept, to an approach centering on the apparatus, a concept both discursive and non-discursive; a system of relations that --- goes beyond discourse and that reflects a new recognition of structures that are outside language" (Widdowson,P. : 1992, 124).

Lady Chatterley's Lover may be taken as a double-voiced discourse with two

different themes : one about woman's exploitation by her male counterpart through love and marriage, and another, about her self-liberation and self-assertion. Lawrence's presentment of traditional views and ideas about erotic and conjugal life and his severe criticism of them suggesting an alternative view produce a double-edged tension in the novel. His ruthless criticism of the widespread view about love and marriage was itself criticized in its term. Lawrence's alternative to modern deadness is attacked from moral standpoint as a wayback ultimately. As a result, his hero is an anti-hero, his heroine is an adulteress and his abode is the woods instead of modern aristocratic homestead.

Constance Raid or Connie, a country-loving vigorous young woman was married to Clifford Chatterley, a baronet. But Clifford actually was not what Connie had expected him to be, a well-to-do intelligentsia with vibrant sex-thrill within himself. Despite being a lieutenant of a smart regiment in the war, Clifford was, to her disillusionment, a coward, always conscious of his own defencelessness although he had all the defence of privileges. He married Connie, inferior to him in social status, because of her self-confidence and capability of confronting the world. He was neither charmed by her blooming femininity, nor compelled by a male urge within himself to fulfil itself in communion with the female in Connie. The sex part was a secondary issue even in their month-long honeymoon :

'They were so close, he and she, apart from that. Connie exulted a little in this intimacy which was beyond sex,--- Sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct, one of the curious obsolete organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, was not really necessary' (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 14, Hereafter by page number).

The marriage-tie wherein sex plays a secondary role would be either a failure or a

bondage. Such a marriage lacks the "long event of perpetual change, in which a man and a woman mutually build up their souls and makes themselves whole." (Lawrence : *Phoenix*, 193). The embarrassing predicament wherein Connie landed herself through her marriage was further aggravated by Clifford's cripplehood. Even before celebrating the first wedding anniversary, Clifford came back home from the war with smashed lower portion of his body. After two years' prolonged treatment, he was pronounced cure, but "the lower half of his body, from hips down, paralysed for ever"(5). Thus he was reduced to be an emasculate male. In reply to the repeated enquiry whether Clifford was intentionally created so or he was symbolic of some deficiencies of modern man, Lawrence said :

As to whether the 'symbolism' is intentional - I don't know. Certainly not in the beginning, when Clifford was created. When I created Clifford and Connie, I had no idea what they were or why they 'were'. They just came, pretty much as they are. But the novel was written, from start to finish, three times. And when I read the first version, I recognized that the lameness of Clifford was symbolic of the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passional paralysis of most men of his sort and class today' (Lawrence : *A Propos ---*, pp.123-24).

Now the colour of Connie's life faded; her vitality was on the wane. She was disillusioned. The secondary issues like material fulfilment and honour to high social status were futile to her. She was horror-stricken by the blank dreariness of the dismal house of Clifford. Mentally Clifford was so intimate to her but physically he was non-existent, utterly out of her touch. She was, so to speak, victimized, caged and physically nullified by the marriage. Lawrence strongly criticized such non-phallic marriage and said that marriage should be basically and permanently phallic having a correspondence

of male blood and female blood. He declared :

‘The phallus is a column of blood that fills the valley of blood of a woman. The great river of male blood touches to its depths the great river of female blood-yet neither breaks its bounds. It is the deepest of all communions, as all the religions, in practice know. And it is one of the greatest mysteries, in fact, the greatest, as almost every initiation shows, showing the supreme achievement of mystic marriage’ (Lawrence : *A Propos* --- 112).

As a serious sexologist, Lawrence, with his convincing argument, magnified the difference between mystic marriage, mainly physical, and modern marriage, a degradation of the same. He observed that the great significance of sex in connubial life had been reduced to a minimum in modern age. Clifford, the modern aristocrat, elucidated his fantastic view about modern conjugal life with a comment that “little by little, living together, two people fall into a sort of unison, they vibrate so intricately to one another. That’s the real secret of marriage, not sex; at least not the simple function of sex.”(52). This meaning of marriage did not put his disability into question. Rather, gladly having acquired the advantage of modern machine, a wheel-chair, to overcome his lameness, he remarked on the triaviality of sex in married life with the comment that “we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing as we arrange going to the dentist”(52) for a toothache. To be precise, Clifford displaced the deep-rooted meaning of marriage from the physical to the cerebral plane and initiated plans to develop a logocentric intimacy between them. He became a writer for nothing but to overwhelm Connie. But she, instead of being charmed, by her husband’s idealistic humbug, was disappointed, hurt, even humiliated. The dead and dull situation of Clifford’s household created a

restlessness within herself. She thought : "She would rush off across the park, and abandon Clifford --- she must get away from the house and everybody. The wood was her only refuge, her sanctuary." (23). Her autonomy and freedom, she felt, was seized by Clifford. She was, in practice, either his a-sexual female companion at the best, or his maid of all works at the worst. All great words like "love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband" (73) were meaningless to her. She led a solitary life amidst the household of Clifford. Her disappointment was further intensified when she visited a newly developed town, Uthwaite, an epitome of modern industrial England. Despite its apparent splendour, she observed it to be dead and dull. The new development had swallowed up even livingness and vigour of men. She observed :

"--- the celliers trailing from the pits, grey-black, distorted, one shoulder higher than the other, slurring their heavy ironshod boots. Underground grey faces, whites of eyes rolling, necks cringing from the pit-roof, shoulders out of shape. Men ! Men! Alas, in some ways patient and good men. In other ways, non-existent. Something that men *should* have was bred and killed out of them. --- they were half, only the grey half of a human being!" (186).

And her lame husband, Clifford Chatterley, another distorted man, was the master or the lord of those men. Master and servants, all were distorted by the tremendous pressure of the mechanically developed industrial civilization. Connie's experience is Lawrence's own experience. His profound antipathy towards the new England, the industrially developed centre, is reflected throughout the book; and his launching of an all-out attack on modernity is conducted by Connie. Like Lawrence, Connie wanted to come out of the bored situation, which was, in opposition to the way of the world, opting for primitivism.

Amidst this aggrieved situation, Connie met Michaelis, a successful Irish playwright, aged about thirty. Initially, she assumed him to be a youth of much physical animation, a reliable personality to help her self-seeking activities. But her intimate talk to him exposed his physical timidity and sex-menace. Although she was confused, she called him to her bedroom and enjoyed sexual intercourse with him. The sexual encounter was plainly a failed effort to develop an in-depth physical intimacy between them. Further, to her disillusionment, Connie found in Michaelis a "melancholy specimen of extraordinary success"(27) whose "eyes were so perfectly unchangingly melancholy, or stoical, or disillusioned, or afraid."(21) In Michaelis, Connie discovered another Clifford, but with a difference. While Clifford was paralysed below the navel, Michaelis was already dead at that part. This bitter sex-experience at once placed Connie at the centre of modern voidness.

In Clifford's study-centre, the well-to-do intelligentsia, believers "in the life of the mind"(36), frequently got together to celebrate the cerebral supremacy over the physical one. Only Tommy Dukes, an unsuccessful intellectual, had a different approach to life. He placed sex at the centre of life with his sharp comment that "sex is just another form of talk, where you act the words instead of saying them"(39). He termed sex as a sort of normal physical conversation between a man and a woman. He said :

"Real knowledge comes out of the whole corpus of the consciousness; out of your belly and your penies as much as out of your brain and mind. The mind can only analyse and rationalise--- while you live your life, you are in some way an organic whole with all life."(44)

Modern civilization, he observed, was lopsided due to its overweening emphasis on the mind and on the brain, with no attempt to integrate them to the body. The only way to integrate body and mind, thought and action, according to Tommy Dukes as well as his creator Lawrence, is to reconcile the opposites with the help of a third force, the Holy Ghost. And the phallus, its representative in the present novel, bridges the chasm between dissolution and creation, male and female, and symbolizes "the resurrection of the body"(87). Tommy Dukes' idea of "the resurrection of the body" had a stimulating effect on Connie. She, having lived with Clifford, as his boon companion, was, so to speak, suffocated by a humdrum life. A hitherto dependent but sensitive woman relegated to Clifford's household, she now wished to be a castaway, active in seeking her own salvation. She now wanted to come out of doors in search of "something special" to satisfy her dissatisfied physical urge. In the Wragby Woods, she saw Clifford's gamekeeper Oliver Mellors, a tall and lean man, aged but still radiant. He was a collier's son, married but parted from his wife. The dark sensual power that Lawrence had previously identified with Walter Morel, the collier in *Sons and Lovers*, not only was revived in the present novel but was also given a dominant role. Lawrence composed *Sons and Lovers* remaining much under his dead mother's thumb and failed to appreciate the dark physical vigour that Walter Morel represented. But in this novel, Lawrence appeared to have come round to see the truth. He recognized his father by cognizing the need of the dark vitality essential to fight deadness of modern life. He further extended his view with a comment that even woman, who desired to achieve salvation, had to undergo physical contact with a man who possessed within himself that

mystic quality. But this does not imply woman's inferiority in achieving salvation, for neither man nor woman can achieve fulfilment or salvation singly. Fulfilment of life needs the union of the opposites, of male in man with female in woman.

On one occasion, Connie had to visit Mellors' lonely cottage in Wragby Woods to deliver Clifford's message to him. She peeped through the window and looked in to see Mellors' well-built torso while he was bathing. His slim physique held her spell-bound. She was confused. She pondered over the matter for a while. Suddenly her attention turned towards a new direction. An insight dawned on her that "the resurrection of the body" was possible only through an integrated approach to life instead of intellectual pursuit; and in this connection, the importance of a well-developed physique should not be neglected. Back home, she turned her interest towards her own physique and found herself glamourless and disappointing with unbloomed femininity. On another occasion, going back to Mellors' desolate cottage, she found a brood of hens, warm and dominant at the breeding period. She observed in them 'something special' that was conspicuously absent from her female self. She thought :

Her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance. It made her feel immensely depressed and hopeless. What hope was there ? She was old, old at twenty seven, with no gleam and sparkle in the flesh. Old through neglect and denial, yes denial---. The mental life! Suddenly she hated it with a rushing fury, the swindle"(81).

All of a sudden, she found herself weeping, an instantaneous outcome of her grief.

Oliver Mellors, the Game Keeper, standing beside, observant, understood about what

had gone wrong with her. He caressed her lightly with his hand, led her into his hut and helped to overcome her physical inertia through sexual intercourse. It evoked within herself a sense of excitement and a joyful expectation about life. She was happy indeed. But on the other hand, her degradation from ladyship to the state of a sexual moron seems to turn the time-machine back towards primitivism. It may be Lawrence's fantastic audacity but it raises a pertinent question whether civilized people can do away with that primal desire or rethink to put vital sex at the centre of life. The present purposive novel defines its own initiative to the problem with a comment that "the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life : for it is in the passionate secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening"(117).

Connie Chatterley's new understanding, sensual and silent, intensified her dissension with both Clifford Chatterley and his idea of cerebral life. She, now overcome by the new sex-experience, came out of her previous wait-and-see sort of business with desperate intention to seek her own salvation. She sought and easily got Clifford's consent to affirm her motherhood with full-bloomed femininity on condition that "it made no difference between them"(128). This permission implies that Clifford, in spite of his intellectual over-maturity, could hardly cross childhood, as far as the physical life is concerned. He undervalued the sex-role in conjugal as well as in adult life, whereas Connie thought it vital. Connie realized that physical fulfilment is the first and foremost achievement in life, whereas child-bearing is a by-product, a forked-flame. She, now non-interested in both Clifford's literary achievement and his household

activities, deputed Mrs. Bolton, a nurse, to serve him. With this step, she was somewhat relieved from her wearisome task of Clifford's companionship. She had now a whale of a time to enjoy herself in the desolate forest. Meanwhile, she visited Mrs. Flint, an adorable mother, and took her little child in her arms. This simple incident suggests her repressed maternal instinct. She thought that it was "warm and fulfilling somehow to have a baby"(154). Her yearning for motherhood drew her physically close to Mellors. On her way back home, she had had sexual intercourse with him. Her frequent sex-act not only renewed the female vigour, but also provided her with an insight that sex-function, in life, develops "an awareness of (one's)— own nature"(371). This new understanding, mainly phallic, later on was further signified by Mrs. Bolton, who reminiscing about her own bygone connubial life, said to Connie :

"That's my lady! the touch of him (her dead husband)
I've never got over it to this day and never shall.
If there's a heaven above, he'll be there and will
lie up against me, so I can sleep." (192)

Indeed, Connie's sex awareness provided her with new insight and wisdom. She discovered that "sex is just another form of talk"(39), "a sort of normal physical conversation between a man and a woman"(39). Her only business now was to realize sex fully and completely, and to "balance up the consciousness of the act and the act itself" (*A Propos* --- 90), in her understanding. This turns us towards Lawrence who throughout the bulk of his work struggled to envision this alternative wisdom that comes through the language of silent physical touch. In the modern age, Lawrence observed, the mystic quality of the body has been peeled off by logic and reason laying no proper

importance to physical communion. Lawrence suggests that this physical understanding comes through deep sexual communion between the male and female partners. In *The Rainbow*, the dialectal differences between Tom Brangwen, an English man, and Lydia Lensky, a polish lady created no problem, at all, in their natural love for each other. They were a successful couple. Again, Alvina Houghton, in *The Lost Girl*, gave up her inherited property and social status in order to accept the atavistic life-style with Ciccio, an Italian. She rejected everything that was modern without regret to ensure her acceptance of the aboriginal culture, mainly physical. Although this new primitive tendency of Lawrence's characters is severely criticized, it demands of us a careful reconsideration of the thrust of Lawrence's thought.

Connie's transcendence from a sex-starved state to the sex-fulfilled one symbolizes her self-awakening. As a triumphant woman, she ran away from Clifford's dominance with a desperate craving for something elevating, and finally discovered the hinterland where the dark god and goddess of creation reside. Sex organs, now instead of being disgraceful, played a key role in her fulfilment. Lawrence handled this matter with a great sense of respect. He never wished to make Connie a sexual moron, and Mellors, a debauch that would turn the entire story towards obscenity. He tried to drive home the point that modern man pay sex and sex-life its due respect and honour, and realize its significance. In Lawrence's opinion :

"We are cut off from the great sources of our inward nourishment and renewal, sources which flow eternally in the universe. Vitally, the human race is dying. It is like a great uprooted tree, with its roots in the air. We must plant ourselves again in the universe"(A Propos- --- 119).

To search for a possible solution to this vital problem, Lawrence turned towards "the warm blood-sex that establishes the living and revitalizing connection between man and woman" (*A Propos*--- 115), and the connecting bridge is the phallus, "the great old symbol of godly vitality" (*A Propos* --- 116).

Connie was till tame, but the shock of Clifford's brutal treatment of Mellors forced her to take the ultimate decision of leaving him for good. One day, Clifford went out of the house in his wheel-chair. Accidentally, it went out of order midway. He vainly attempted to repair the chair and was rather exasperated with his repeated failure. He called on Mellors and forced him assist him in his journey, pushing the wheel-chair. This incident exposed the hindside of Clifford. He bullied Mellors and threatened him of non-payment of wages. His bully-boy tactics remind us of Gerald Crich who, like Clifford, had exerted his brutal force to tame the Arab mare or the wild rabbit or, paradoxically speaking, Gudrun, his beloved. Lawrence observed such habitual brutality in person whose love-relationships with women were either a failure or a counterfeit one. Although Clifford's treatment established his authority as a ruling-class representative over Mellors, it exposed his own deficiency as a man. With this, Connie's understanding of two types of relationships, the living one with Mellors and the dead and bullying one with Clifford, was complete. She determined to leave Clifford and left for London with the help of Hilda, her sister.

Immediately after Connie's departure, Bertha Coutts, Mellors' legal wife, spread his scandal with Connie at Wragby. Connie's efforts at personal salvation now faced

threats of social degradation. But Connie was not afraid, for what society termed as scandalous, was to her a way to personal salvation. She not only faced the consequences of her actions but also cheered up Mellors to brush aside the social scandal as mere trifles. Connie wrote to him : "I am very much distressed to hear of all the trouble your wife is making for you, but don't mind it, it is only a sort of hysteria. It will all blow over as suddenly as it came"(311). Connie was now determined to shake off the deadness of her non-phallic conjugal life with Clifford and the consequent forlornness. She unhesitatingly disclosed to Clifford the paternity of her conceived baby and expressed her desire to choose that man, that is, Mellors as her husband. This shocking piece of information instantly shattered Clifford's strength of mind. Clifford said to her with disgust : "you're not normal, you're not in your right senses. You're one of those half-insane, perverted women who must run after depravity, the *nostalgie de la boue*" (348). This comment of Clifford is to somewhat similar to that of Dr. Mitchell, another aristocrat, who remained unsuccessful in his love with Alvina Houghton, in *The Lost Girl*. He said to Alvina :

"I little thought at the time when I was hoping to make you my wife, that you were carrying with a dirty Italian organ grinder. So your fair seeming face covered with schemes and vice of your true nature. --- I hope that, when I met you on the streets of Liecester Square, I shall have forgiven you sufficiently to be able to throw you a coin" (*The Lost Girl*, 403).

Apparently both Alvina Houghton and Connie Chatterley are socially depraved; but at a deeper level, they remain successful adventurers into the dark territory of the libido, the mystery of the physical life. Although they are outcasts from modern coivilized society,

their satisfaction with the newly discovered mystery of the primal order of life compels us to ponder the matter with respect and seriousness. In case of Connie, it was her inner sanity rather than insanity that provided her with sufficient courage to confess her felt-truth about life without pretension. Her bold remark shattered Clifford's assumed superiority. He caught hold of Mrs. Bolton's hand for a support and rested his head on her breast. As she once lightly kissed him, he said : "Yes! Do kiss me!"(341). Indeed Clifford was a devil child who wished to keep a wife-mother.

Lawrence, however, could not successfully accommodate Annable, the gamekeeper to the modern temper when he wrote *The White Peacock*. Annable had to die leaving behind an ominous prophecy that "all civilization was the painted fungus of rotteness". (*The White Peacock*, 207). Lawrence in his last masterpiece could in a measure accomplish this incomplete task by successfully placing Mellors as a symbol of vitality, firmly in the very midst of life. But Mellors' prophecy, unlike that of Annable, offered a new hope for the future civilization;

I don't believe in the world, not in money, nor in advancement, nor in the future of our civilization. If there's got to be a future for humanity, there'll have to be a big change from what now is"(324).

In the present novel, we see that Lawrence's hero is unsocial, his heroine is socially deprived, his idea of love is mainly sensual and narrow, his world is the primitive one, his god is the dark god of phallus and his motto is one for another shore, the other of modern civilization. But the things he struggled to make us see are the essential realities of life, a proper understanding of which might usher in a 'big change' within us and hence the world.