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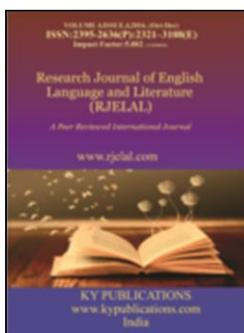
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## DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF MOTHER'S LOVE: A STUDY OF D. H. LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS

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### ABSTRACT

D. H. Lawrence writes, because of the internal compulsion or necessity. He seeks relief from his internal problems by externalising them in fiction. He is a pioneer of the psycho-analytical fiction in England. *Sons and Lovers* may be regarded as the first psycho-analytical novel in English literature. The novelist has examined for the first time the psychological theory of the Oedipal Complex or the "mother-fixation" theory of Sigmund Freud. The present study aims at to analyse that Mrs Morel in *Sons and Lovers* is the main reason of bringing the catastrophe in the lives of different characters, particularly in Paul Morel's. Mrs Morel, the mother in the novel is the most dominant character. Undoubtedly, the story revolves around her. She lays all her claims on her sons, particularly on Paul Morel, due to the failure in her relationship with her husband. She tries to get the emotional fulfilment from her sons. The novel clearly shows that the mother has dominated her sons. Both William Morel and Paul Morel tries to come out from her domination but unfortunately they are unsuccessful in their attempt. Researcher believes that Mrs Morel fails both as a wife and as a mother. She is unable to give the both, their proper positions what they deserves to be. She ignores her husband and reduces him to the mere child or servant and sublimates her two sons William and Paul, as she allows them to play the roles of surrogate husbands to her. This change in the natural positions makes both husband and children unhappy and ultimately ruins the whole family. It cannot be claimed that this paper is the last word on the subject. It is however, believed that it would open new avenues of study on Sons and Lovers.

Key words: D. H. Lawrence, Freud, Oedipal Complex, Catastrophe and Dominant.

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D. H. Lawrence deals with many issues related to human relationship in his works. He brings out the problems faced by man and woman in their relationship whether it is between boy and girl, mother and son or between father and daughter. In *Sons and Lovers*, he shows the "destructive effects of mother's love on her sons." He portrays the struggle of two sons to come out from the

domination of their mother. It is mostly evident from Paul Morel who is not successful in cast off the clouds of maternal love, which prevents him to have a natural relationship with any other woman.

The love between mother and son is similar to the love presented in the theory of Sigmund Freud "Oedipus complex." Sigmund Freud uses this term to explain the manifestation of infantile

sexuality in the relationship of the child to his parents. M. H. Abrams in *A Handbook of Literary Terms* defines the term Oedipus complex, he says: "that is, the repressed but continuing presence in the adult's unconscious of the male infant's desire to possess his mother and to have his rival, the father, out of the way" (249).

In all pages of the novel, the reader can find the shadow of dominant mother on her sons. *Sons and Lovers* is a story of Miner's (Walter Morel's) family, who is working in a mine, is a drunkard and spending his money lavishly in a pub. His family consists of his wife Gertrude Morel, three sons namely: William Morel, Paul Morel, Arthur Morel, and a daughter called, Annie. The mother wants to attain success in her life with the help of her sons.

Mrs Morel has a compulsion to improve herself and her family. She evaluates her husband and his companions according to arbitrary social and economic standards. She uses all the men in her home to fulfil her own ends. She does not bother about their individuality. She is not responsible only for the sufferings of William and Paul, but also for the sufferings faced by all the characters in the novel.

Mrs Morel does not find any kind of satisfaction from her husband that makes her to turn to her elder son, William Morel for emotional fulfilment. She begins to allow William to play the role of a surrogate husband. She unconsciously seeks to reduce her husband to a child. William's one part is dominated by his mother, but he is subconsciously compelled to choose a sexual partner someone, who is completely opposite to his mother. So, for that fulfilment he turns to "Gypsy," or "Gyp," as he called her, whose actual name is Louisa Lily Denys Western. He does not get real satisfaction from her, because his mother dominates his soul. Even the act of sex could not make him comfortable in his life. William Morel dies as a young man due to the illness caused by his evil practices. His mother's excessive love for him plays an important role in his life and death. It is the reason for his frustration and his preoccupation with death. This relationship leads him to the path of death.

Mrs Morel then turns her attention towards her next son, Paul. Mrs Morel takes Paul as

a surrogate husband in place of William. They love each other like lovers and share their lives with each other. Paul now begins to hate his father and he wishes that his father should die. He loves his mother differently and does not like anybody to come between them, not even his father. It is astonishing to the readers to note that Paul is praying for the death of his father because of his excessive love for his mother: "Paul hated his father. As a boy he had a fervent private religion . . . he prayed every night. 'Lord, let my father die,' he prayed very often"(75).

It is obvious here that the act of Paul's love towards his mother and hatred towards father is Oedipus complex. According to the psychoanalysts, the sons have unconscious liking for their mothers. They consider fathers are the obstruction between them and their mothers. When, Mr Morel was in hospital. Both of them enjoy his absence very much. Paul is extremely happy and he expresses his happiness to his mother, as Lawrence presents: "I'm the man in the house now,' he used to say to his mother with joy. They learned how perfectly peaceful the home could be..." (109). Mrs Morel is also immensely happy at her husband's absence in the home. She unburdens her troubles by sharing with Paul. She shares everything with him but without much of her intention.

Paul is unlucky to the object of domineering mother, who treats him as lover. He suffers from the excessive maternal love which could not allow him to have a free choice. D. H. Lawrence adeptly brings out the predicament of Paul in the novel. Mrs Morel throughout her life is successful in drawing the attention of Paul towards her. Mrs Morel dominates the spiritual aspect of him. The sexual desire in Paul, like his elder brother, leads him towards other women, like Miriam and Clara Dawes. With Miriam, he does not have a successful relationship and it is due to her interest in spiritual aspect. She wants to possess the soul of Paul. Paul says, "You make me so spiritual!" . . . 'And I don't want to be spiritual" (229).

There is a rivalry between his mother and Miriam over the possession of his soul. Mrs Morel is afraid of Miriam who is capable to take Paul away from her. She warns Paul not to meet Miriam. She

begins to hate her, as she thinks she is a rival in her love for Paul. In order to draw Paul towards herself, Miriam gives away to him everything. On realising the influence of Miriam on Paul, Mrs Morel turns romantic towards him and tries to pacify his sexual urge. She, in order to cast-off the effects of Miriam's love over Paul draws herself more nearer to him as they are intimate lovers. Lawrence is condemned for unconventional and explicit portrayal of sex in his novels. In this novel, he presents the love between mother and son, which is undoubtedly erotic. When Paul comes home, to his mother with a complaint that Miriam has absorbed him. Mrs Morel has become worried about losing him to Miriam. She tries to dominate his other part too, which is left unfulfilled in him by her till then. She tries to gratify the sexual urge of her son, which is unconventional in the fiction world. Here, it becomes essential to refer to the romantic scene between Paul and his mother to show the intensity of their love to the readers, which is undoubtedly erotic:

He had taken off his collar and tie, and rose, bare-throated, to go to bed. As he stooped to kiss mother, she threw her arms round his neck, . . .

'I can't bear it. I could let another woman – but not her. She'd leave me no room, not a bit of room –'

. . . 'And I've never – you know, Paul – I've never had husband – not really –'

He stroked his mother's hair, and his mouth was on her throat. (258)

Such a bare throat kissing is clearly taking readers to the erotic world. It is really a serious fore-play. One cannot cut anybody's throat and then say that my intention is not, giving him harm or killing him. Definitely there will be drains of blood, and if left unchecked or not controlled immediately it will ultimately lead to the death of a person involved. Lawrence himself denies that such instincts should not be drawn to the conscious level, but should be kept in the unconscious mind. However, it seems to be that he himself has failed to control, to bring his unconscious into the conscious level. Dark clouds are sign of heavy rain. At times rain may pour down heavily or may not come at all. Lawrence's

description is in fact indicating the appearance of dark rain clouds. It is left to the reader's discretion. The description of Lawrence clearly indicates the attempt made by Mrs Morel to come close physically to her son. Her reference that she does not have an amiable husband adds strength to this argument. Her passionate kiss and repeated utterances, such as "she never has a husband," make known her intimacy to her son to the readers. But she never gives complete satisfaction to her son. It makes Paul to think of another woman.

Paul is the conditioned child, as one can see in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which the Alphas, Betas, Gammas and Deltas are conditioned by the new state. In order to control them, they give a drug called "soma" to them, which keeps them calm and also makes them unable to go against the rules of the new state. Mrs Morel also uses herself (body) as a "soma" to check Paul's conduct, which unable him escape from the clutches of his mother.

The only reason, why Paul often turns back to his mother is that, he now gets some sort of physical fulfilment too from his mother. Now the question arises here that if he gets both physical and spiritual fulfilment from a single woman, Mrs Morel, then why he turns to Clara for sexual fulfilment? It is because sexual relation between Paul and his mother cannot go to the depth where Paul's sexual instincts want to be. Both can give and take some sort of physical fun, but they cannot make love with each other to the satisfaction of both. Paul gets such kind of love from Clara. They have shared their full sexual life with each other. Love making with Clara keeps him happy for some time, more than in relation with Miriam, but she is not able to keep him for long.

Mrs Morel's failure in her married life ruins the life of her sons. Her love for Paul is destructive and it becomes the reasons for Paul's tension, depression and frustration. He loses peace in his life. She becomes more selfish, when she prevents Paul from Miriam. In order to draw Paul towards herself, Mrs Morel has laid a trap around him by trying to give him sexual fulfilment.

Now the question arises that, Why, Mrs Morel gives way to Paul to meet Clara easily than Miriam? Mrs Morel understands the depth of

spiritual power in Miriam. She knows that Miriam wants to dominate Paul's soul, the same thing which she herself wants. It is the reason why Mrs Morel gives way to Paul to meet Clara easily than Miriam. Clara has no claims on Paul's soul and her love is too physical. Mrs Morel knows that their relationship will not continue for long period. Lawrence does not believe that love should be only spiritual. He believes that for a successful relationship between man and woman, they should love each other physically and spiritually. Mrs Morel loves Paul spiritually and when she comes to know that Miriam also loves him spiritually, she becomes much worried. If Miriam is able to fulfil both the spiritual and physical need of Paul, he will never come back to his mother. That is why Mrs Morel is very much worried of Miriam, whom she finds capable of doing that. Mark Spilka in his book *The Love Ethics of D. H. Lawrence* has quoted Lawrence's work, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*. In which he says: "Mrs. Morel saw that if Miriam could only win her son's sex sympathy there would be nothing left for her" (63). This is the reason why Mrs Morel unconsciously shared everything with Paul. Mrs Morel does not release Paul from her domination throughout her life, not even after her death. Death prevents only them to meet physically but their souls are united forever and nobody can separate them. So it becomes very difficult for him to resist against the desire of joining his mother.

The cause of Paul's failure in the relationship with Miriam is her desire to possess the soul of Paul, which is already under the control of his dominant mother. Hence, she fails in the contest and loses to the strong willed mother of Paul. Failure in the relationship with Clara is due to her focus on physical aspect. Mere physical relationship will not continue for a long time. Hence, the relationship with Clara Dawes comes to an end quickly. Two natural instincts divide Paul, between them, the one telling him to cherish his mother and the other telling him to leave her and take a wife. But the bond of blood unites them every time. Mother holds his soul tightly and he remains under her domination throughout his life.

It is very interesting to know that after the death of Paul's mother, whether he turns to life or

death? In the last part of the novel, he does not have any kind of relationship which could save him from the darkness of life. Paul breaks with both Clara and Miriam at the end of the novel. The depth of his commitment to his mother has prevented him forming a strong bond to another woman. He is divided between the two. This spilt clearly shows that there is no future to Paul. Vivas Eliseo in his work *D. H. Lawrence: The Failure and the Triumph of Art*, says that, "We do not know what happens to Paul when he reaches the city towards which he turns at the end of the book. But we know that the struggle has turned him already in to a cruel man and damaged his capacity for normal relations (139).

It vividly reveals the destructive effect of mother's love to the readers. The cream is being licked off from life of Paul by his mother. He is now unable to get any kind of satisfaction from another woman. In his life there is only repetition, disillusion and barrenness. Mrs Morel's notion at the end, that her death may bring the opportunity for Paul to develop a relationship with another woman may not be correct. The light towards which he turns at the end, gives a mistaken notion that he turns to life, but it is not right. There is no future and no life left for Paul because there is no capacity left in him for normal relations. The light towards which he turns at the end of the novel is glowing but that is mechanical, which is unlikely to save him. This light of city is a negative image to Lawrence, who hates cities and towns from the beginning. It is too materialistic without life and happiness. Lawrence is critical of the industrialisation, for the impact it draws on human sensibility.

Paul wins the readers sympathy at the end of the novel when he is left alone, without any body's support and love. The light which he saw at the end of the novel is mechanical and manmade. He cannot get natural harmony in his future life. Lawrence in his letter to Edward Garnett dated 14 November 1912, says: "The son caste off his mistress, attend to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death" (161). So Paul is drifted away to nothingness and finally he staying isolated, rootless, purposeless and unfulfilled.

Researcher has given enough evidence to prove the point that, Mrs Morel has destroyed the lives of her sons, Particularly Paul. Mrs Morel destroys the lives of her sons, in order to fill the void in her, which is left by her unsuccessful married life. She feels lonely in her life that is why she wants both her sons, William and Paul should remain with her. She keeps them away from other women and destroys their individual lives. She is jealous, lonely and very unhappy woman and her demands on her sons, particularly on Paul have crippled him. Mother's destructive love brings the catastrophe in the lives of her sons.

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