

Exploration of Man-Woman Relationship in D.H. Lawrence's *The Lost Girl*

Nivedita R Karun

Assistant Professor on Contract
Payyanur College, Kannur, Kerala

Abstract: D.H. Lawrence's *The Lost Girl* was first published in the year 1920. Of the many writers on the Man-Woman relationship, D.H. Lawrence continues to stand out as one of the most intelligent and articulate one. Although he was famous for novels, stories and poems, he also wrote a number of powerful essays where he spelled out his ideas on love, which took shape during the writing of his novels. A direct, forceful and extreme sensibility was seen in those essays. Human beings who are seeking to understand the lessons of Man-Woman relationship can learn a great deal from him. This paper discusses the man-woman relationship in the novel *The Lost Girl* through the protagonist Alvina Houghton. The novel is set in the European context synthesizing socio-cultural relationship. The writer looks into the lower middle class group and their problems set in the coal fields, small towns, artistic groups etc. There is some microscopic analysis of the social connection which is revealed through the conversation of the characters that were in different temperamental approaches. We can apply the Freudian psychoanalysis to this novel. The man-woman relationship is revealed through an analytical approach magnifying the minute details of the novel.

Keywords: relationship, novel, man-woman, socio-cultural, psychoanalysis, Freudian

Sigmund Freud who has been considered the founding father of Psychoanalysis felt compelled to ask a provocative question at a critical juncture. "What does a woman want?" Indeed we don't expect a psycho-analyst of Freud's stature to come up with a question like this. The fact remains that most of Freud's celebrated patients were women. But then Freud's unsettling question throws light on his inability to unlock the complexity of women's psyche. True, he had convincing answers to several questions related to the libido of woman. But questions accumulated. These questions shook and shocked him. Are men and women polar opposites? Can't there be a harmonizing point of intersection between man and woman? Why is it that the sexual life of humanity abounds in unsolvable riddles? Does the division between male libido and female libido make frustration a condition of existence? Really speaking, Freud's question, "what does a woman want?" born of his sheer perplexity at the magnitude of female frustration. True desire is fundamental to humanity. But then, according to Freud, female libido is in a class by itself. The female libido being what it is there can be no mutually rewarding relationship between man and woman. Freud's insights into man-woman relationships bring home the truth that ambivalence co-exists with female sensibility. Freud is led into thinking that the ambivalence which is built into the second sex paves the way for hell. The moral of his vision amounts to the knowledge that the ambivalent behavior on the part of the second sex does away with the reciprocal link between man and woman.

Going through myths as well as literary master pieces of bygone eras we wake up to the fact that male chauvinism has a masterly way of fabricating fictions about feminine sensibility, literary and mythical heritage that has often taken sides with male chauvinism. The biblical story of creation speaks for itself. Indeed male chauvinism is at the heart of this narrative. Adam would not have been exiled from paradise, had Eve been guarded against Satan. Eve surrendered herself to the tempting words of Satan and made Adam eat the forbidden fruit of knowledge. It had catastrophic sequence. This archetypal situation speaks volumes about the myth maker's unsympathetic attitude towards the second sex. The biblical parable of the fall of grace contrasts Adam's innocence with Eve's guilt. Thus from the period of Biblical creation onwards the relationship between man and woman acquired complex properties.

Shakespeare was the first major writer to explore the varied dimensions of this complexity. Shakespeare's portrayal of Ophelia as a woman embittered by myriad frustrations is a landmark in the annals of world literature. At a time the relationship between Ophelia and Hamlet is doomed. The gruesome murder of his father as masterminded by his uncle has a sickening effect upon him. Truly Hamlet finds himself in an embarrassing situation. "Go to a Nunnery" says Hamlet to Ophelia. Hamlet's mother's oddities make him think that women are incurably deceptive in their ways. Indeed the specter of the deceptive woman has been haunting the western psyche from Biblical period onwards. Immortal characters like Hamlet and Werther end up as burnt out cases. Surprisingly John Keats who was a broken lover at a time too finds solace in the words of Hamlet to Ophelia "Go to a Nunnery". Like Hamlet Keats too ended up as a disillusioned soul. Eventually he had no option except to capitalize on his poetic imagination which gave him spiritual anchorage during his final days.

Shakespeare's Hamlet had strange descendants on the western literary front. The great French Poet Charles Baudelaire is an example. Baudelaire's controversial collection of poems namely *The flowers of Evil* paved way for a new age in the history of the world. Baudelaire's masterpieces highlight the complexity of man-woman relationship. On the one hand Baudelaire was Hamlet like as he related himself to his female companions. On the other hand, there were moments when the sensualist in him got the upper hand. Baudelaire was often caught between the mighty opposites of life. For all his yearning for women, Baudelaire at times loathed them. Baudelaire embodied him in the classic and between flesh and spirit. The burning anguish of his being was the outcome of the war of contraries.

A later day writer like D.H. Lawrence too embodied in him this burning anguish. His celebrated works like *Sons and Lovers* and *Woman in Love* testify to the conflicting relationship between sensuality and puritanism. As a mighty observer of the human dream Lawrence was exceptionally alive to this scenario. Somewhere in his life Lawrence blossomed into a visionary. Armed with a series of life sustaining visions, Lawrence eventually transcended the war of opposites which is fundamental to his characters like Paul Morel. But question remains. Did this transcendence have lasting value? This master explorer of man-woman relationship had been brought home the deceptive nature of human transcendence. It is no exaggeration to say that a sort of disenchantment with the human situation overwhelmed being in its final days. This enchantment was something genuine. It rings true against the background of the tragic heritage of life. From time, immemorial spiritual crisis have co-existed with man's amorous life. Immortal works like *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Anna Karenina* and *Madam Bovary* centre on dead ends emerging from human passions.

Of the many writers on the Man-Woman relationship, D.H. Lawrence continues to stand out as one of the most intelligent and articulate one. Although he was famous for novels, stories and poems, he also wrote a number of powerful essays where he spelled out his ideas on love, which took shape during the writing of his novels. A direct, forceful and extreme sensibility was seen in those essays. Humans who are seeking to understand the lessons of Man-Woman relationship can learn a great deal from him. His words, which were written a half century ago, are thoroughly modern and go to the very heart of the matter. Lawrence was often seen an iconoclast who was associated with the "sexual revolution". The relationship between man and woman is the main dominant theme in his novels whether expressed in one form or the other in various shades, hues and aspects. Such relationship may be between husband and wife, between son and his mother or between a woman and her lover. Sex plays an important part for the development of such relationships in one way, or the other.

Was man, the eternal protagonist, born of woman, from her womb of fathomless emotion? Or was woman, with her deep womb of emotion, born from the rib of active man, the first created? Man, the doer, the knower, the original in being, is he lord of life? Or is woman, the great Mother, who bore us from the womb of love, is she the supreme Goddess? (Fantasia of the Unconscious 133)

This as Lawrence says is the question of all time. As long as the world exists, it will be answered in different ways by different people. Lawrence himself does not attempt to find an answer to this question. It appears that he endorses equality between the sexes as a condition for healthy love to exist. The man-woman relationship was the supreme theme of Lawrence's major novels particularly *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He also had a strong feeling that there is a close relationship between man, woman and nature. Man and woman both depend on each other, but in different ways. "Relationship is a powerful, often dizzying dance of polarities - sometimes delightful and seductive, sometimes fierce and combative, sometimes energizing, sometimes exhausting" (Welwood).

The novel *The Lost Girl* by D.H. Lawrence explores the life of women in mining hood town of Woodhouse. The usual involvement of mining lives and the complex society of different class groups are prevalent here also. James Houghton is a widowed man who has got wide imagination and dream; regarding fabrics and admired the novels of George Macdonald. "He dreamed of silks and poplins, luscious in texture and of unforeseen exquisiteness: he dreamed of carriages of the "County" arrested before his windows, of exquisite women ruffling charmed, entranced to his counter" (12). The novel is narrated with the birth of Alvina Houghton; daughter of James Houghton living at Manchester house in Woodhouse, a growing town. There began a competitive silk and woolen business with other concerns in Woodhouse. He was a man of imagination who had connections with several parts of England in textile trade. His poor wife was ailing with a weak heart and gradually his fabric business collapsed opening only on certain days. In the mean time there came Miss Frost a governess for his daughter Alvina Houghton, who lived permanently in the house, the other one Miss Pinneger was managing his business and these two women had undue influence in the case of Houghton's family. The death of Mrs Houghton made James gloomy. Miss Frost became a protective mother to Alvina who never went to school but home schooled by Miss Frost. The social life of Alvina was shaped by Miss Frost, congregational chapel and the library. She loved playing piano which was enriched by Miss Frost.

Even though Alvina was the lone daughter, her father had not much intimacy with her; who maintained only a traditional relationship with his daughter. Mr Houghton was doing business, coming home, living with them and keeping a distance from all members of the family including his daughter. He was giving food, providing education and infrastructure for her well being and peaceful life. The relationship Alvina shared with her father, affected her psychologically further making her future relationships with other men grey. James Houghton was reluctant to provide her a formal education and he lacked far sightedness, frugality and squandered money in the name of textile business, theatre and motel. Just after his death the family had to dispose of the whole property including their Manchester house. He had mortgaged his home to others and committed a huge debt in the name of lavishness; in the absence of a planned life.

At the age of twenty three Alvina met a man named Alexander Graham, who was an Australian who had come to England at Edinburg to continue his medical practice. He had a love affair with Miss Alvina and wished to marry her. The family was reluctant to marry off Alvina to Graham who was trying to go back to Australia. There was a sort of engagement with the doctor but later she realized this intimacy with doctor won't last longer. Alvina psychologically was indecisive often. She was vacillating temperamentally and throughout the affair she expressed much uncertainty. Throughout her life she was uttering "I don't really know" and "I don't really" and thus she was a 'lost girl'. Actually she did not love the little man Alexander Graham "She felt him a terrible outsider, an inferior to the truth" (24). Alvina was much distracted due to the relationship with Alexander Graham. Her father said, "well ofcourse you will do as you think but there is great risk in going so far-A great risk he would be entirely unprotected"(25). She was doubtful about the love from Alexander Graham. He didn't show any intimacy towards her family and there was not even a word about the separation of her parents when they were away from Australia. His last words reflected his sensuality and capricious nature. He was even ready to neglect her. Thus in the end she decided to break off her engagement. Going away with a foreigner who was far away in Australia was not a futile attempt in the case of the protagonist Alvina. Thus the relationship exposed the hollowness of love merely for monetary benefits as having a physician with good fortunes.

Even after breaking off the engagement, she was often looking into the photographs of that man. Her love for Alexander Graham was still primitive and immature. In the same manner she felt the relationship with other men in Woodhouse and they were mere blank sheets of paper in comparison. The sterile nature and the psychological frame work were often reflected in the early years of her love. The commonality was found in everyone and thus she is a lonely girl or lost girl temperamentally rather than a vitality or synergy in the case of love relationship; she was following a traditional approach with the youths. When she opted for a maternity nurse profession she distanced herself with other medicos. When Alvina became a nurse she had relationship with a person named Headley. He was in the medical profession. He wished to marry her but she was doubtful about his sincerity. His touch was quick, muscular and lambent but her approach was deep, electric and paralyzing. She was friendly towards Headley but unwilling to become a life partner. She compared him with several men and in the end found fault with them. "She could do as she liked. There was an inflexible fate within her, which shaped ends. (39)

Miss Alvina had a healthy relationship with Albert Witham and Arthur Witham. She discussed her previous engagement with them. They were walking in the evening visiting several places in the outskirts. Albert Witham was in Oxford for education later got employed in the Cape of Good Hope and occasionally he had acquaintance with Alvina. He wished to marry Alvina but she

was not ready to marry him because he was far away in Africa. One day they met in the chapel at midnight and there he had an accidental fall which bruised his body. At that time she came to know about the physical parts of his body which created disgust in the mind of Alvina. Albert Witham was a poor chap and this infirmity created a dislike in her. Even though she dressed his wounds, full of blood stains on her dress, he did not move her heart and thus their relationship came to an end.

Mr James Houghton and Mr May's friendship flourished during the opening of the theatre. Mr May became the manager at Lumley; while Alvina became the part of the activities in the theatre booth. In addition to the film shows there were dance and music programs where Alvina was the pianist. She had a good relationship with the theatre manager May with whom she had discussions about the future of the theatre and its shows.

Natcha-kee-tawara troupes were called from England. They were five members; Madame Rochard, Max Louis, Geoffrey, Francesco otherwise called Ciccio. These five members staged their programs often in the theatre at Endeavour in Lumley. Natcha-kee-tawara was a Red Indian troupe performing Red Indian dance and music. Alvina was included as a pianist in the troupe by Madam Rochard and she introduced her to the other four male members of the troupe. Every week Alvina met a new set of artists three or four with whom she had intimacy. She found it amusing to meet them and know them all. Even the young men were peeping through the curtain to know the young lady Alvina, but were advised not to do so. Their act was a private love farce. Alvina had a flirtatious relationship with a male flute player and piccolo operator. She was psychologically bended to watch handsome men irrespective of young or old. Deep inside her heart she loved the flute player even though he was fifty years. She liked muscular-robust-healthy men with much handsome nature. She liked their amusing, charming and manly nature. Rather than intellectual and human quality she was attracted to the sublime nature of youths and middle-aged. Natcha-kee-tawara Red Indian troupe influenced her in a great way. Just after the shows they had genuine discussions about human life, trials and tribulations. Ciccio was always secretly watching her without her notice and Aliva liked his negligent muscular slouching fashion. Every woman is fond of the physical muscular force of man; she used to walk with him on Sundays. Her subconscious mind wished his presence.

Alvina wept when the Natchas had gone. She loved them so much; she wanted to be with them. Even Ciccio regarded as the only one of the Natchas. She looked forward to his coming a to a visit from the troupe. (176)

When Ciccio visited her on the departure of the troupe, her father had an ultimate death amidst the fluctuating fortunes of the Pleasure Palace the cine theatre. They were in conversation outside the house where in there started their first lovemaking. They agreed for becoming lovers as one, inseparable. Both of them found solace in kissing passionately. She left through the yard door on the coming of Miss Pinnegar, who did not like their affair. She did not give any response to Miss Pinnegar calling her.

But Alvina did not answer. She turned, slipped past, ran indoors and upstairs to the little bare bed room she had made her own. She locked the door and kneeled down on the floor, bowing down her head to her knees in a paroxysm on the floor. In a paroxysm—because he loved him. She doubled herself up in a paroxysm on her knees on the floor—because she loved him. It was far more like pain, like agony, than like joy. She swayed herself to and fro in a paroxysm of unbearable sensation, because she loved him (182).

Alvina was in a psychological state of affairs just after the demise of her father. Now she has lost her mother and father and was looking for a solace from another male who was strong enough to protect her. She needed prestige in the society as the better half of a good natured, robust youth with a foreign cultural orientation. When Madame questioned her about her affair with Ciccio she opened her mind. Madame disclosed the futility of marrying of an Italian with meager income and poor background. This made her confused and upset. The sexual union of Francesco Marasca or Ciccio with Alvina Houghton twice before their marriage strengthened their relationship and the Freudian theory is applicable here. Even though she was elder than her darling his muscular predominance conquered her mind and body. His unfathomed handsomeness, lustrous dark beauty, sensible and good nature entered into her bones and her spirit was synergized with his magnetic touch, kiss and ultimate bliss through a synthesis of the body and mind.

Alvina left the artist troupe and decided to become a maternity nurse. She got through the interview and received appointment at a hospital in Windermere. There in the hospital she worked with a doctor named Mitchell who was around fifty four years old. He was very strict in the treatment of his patients but had a softcorner for Alvina who was working with him.

She kept her attitude of quiet amusement, and little by little he sank. From being a lofty creature soaring over her head, he was now like a big fish poking its nose above water and making eyes at her. He treated her with rather presuming deference (170).

The doctor put the engagement ring on her finger and fixed the date for his betrothal with Alvina and revealed to others directly and in newspaper. But secretly she made her escape. She left England for Italy through France with her lover. They moved to Pescocalasio, a beautiful place blessed with mountains, meadows and natural pastures. From her first fiance Alexander to the last one Ciccio she was of a wavering mentality, quite doubtful about the character of the future husband, handsome nature and their fortunes. She became Allaye to Ciccio and other members of his family. In the meantime she conceived a child. Ciccio was waiting for the recruitment in the Italian First World War troupe. He consoled her by giving her promise of return after the war ends and there after their journey to America. But she was a lost girl who expected much from her marital life but cut short by the imminent occurrence of the First World War.

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