

# Relevance of Human Relationships in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

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## Abstract

D.H. Lawrence was a novelist of creative imagination and prophetic vision like Thomas Hardy. *Sons and Lovers* is considered to be a rich and complex novel. It operates on various levels: social, psychological, archetypal, and universal. He uses novels to present to his readers his interpretation of life; both of them were concerned with basic problems of human existence, man's relations with fellows, and with the universe beyond himself. The present research analyses the problem of establishing new relations and the adjustment of old ones. Lawrence was not concerned with his characters in the context of society or with their moral or political ideas; he concentrated on their most intimate emotional relationships and their sensual and physical surroundings. In this context, Lawrence was obsessed with the problem of human relationships and, particularly, sexual relationships. That is why human relationships are one of the basic themes of Lawrence's novels.

**Key Words:** human relationship, social and psychological, over-possessiveness

## Introduction

D.H. Lawrence feels that relationships are badly affected by the differences of temperament, differences in the power and quality of love, conflict of wills, and emotional attitudes. In other words, human relationship emerges from over-possessiveness or the desire for domination. He feels that the reconciliation of the conflict in aspects is essential for a meaningful and happy relationship. Otherwise, life turns into tragedy. The novel *Sons and Lovers* deals with the problems of human relationships. Lawrence is a compulsive writer. He writes only when he is compelled from within to convey his experiences. He once wrote: "I can only write what I feel strongly about and that, at present, is the relation between men and women." The novel is considered to be a complex and rich novel. It operates on various levels; this novel may be said to be the first psychoanalytical novel in English. It has practically examined a psychological theory. Oedipus Complex or mother-fixated theory of Freud, as it was not confirmed whether he read Freud before or after writing *Sons and Lovers*.

In *Sons and Lovers*, we discuss human relationships in terms of class. Being a son of a miner, Lawrence was familiar with their sufferings, their sensibility, their sense of dignity and self-respect, their essential goodness, despite their ragged, unrefined manners and appearance, their simple joys and sorrows, and all this knowledge he has used to great advantage in this novel. Paul's words strike the keynote of the novel: "Because the difference between people isn't in their class, but in themselves. Only from the middle-class one gets ideas, and from the common people's life its warmth. You feel their hates and loves." Lawrence's love and understanding of common people are reflected in the novel at every step. They are more sympathetic and have a great sense of fellow feeling than people of the middle or upper class. During Mrs. Morel's confinement, the entire neighborhood comes out with help and services; when Morel is sick, the whole community rises to the occasion, and at many times of need, they share the grief of the family.

**Conflict in the domestic life:** The domestic life of the Morels is full of strife. Mrs. Morel married Mr. Morel for his physical vigour and pleasant manners. But soon she is disillusioned with her husband. She has to face the economic hardships of the life of a miner's life. The basic clash is the clash of passion and intellect. They are opposites to each other. Mr. Morel is uncouth, rough, and not intellectual. She tries to reform him and talks about religion and philosophy to him. But she fails in her attempt. In her attempt, she ultimately destroys him. She humiliates him and treats him like a dog. So much so that she turns his sons against him. The outcome of all this is that he takes to drinking and loses his identity in his own house. Thus, she makes her own life

and that of her husband full of misery. The incompatibility between husband and wife leads to tragedy for every member of the family.

**Over-possessive nature of Mrs. Morel:** Mrs. Morel becomes over-possessive, which has a damaging effect on the healthy growth of her sons, William and Paul. No doubt, she is a devoted mother, does everything for their good education and progress in life. But by and by her love becomes too possessive

But the life. But by and by her love becomes too possessive, after her non-cordial relations with her husband, she turns to her sons for her emotional fulfilment. She makes them husband substitute emotionally if not physically. "When William was a child, he was more attached to his mother than his father. His attachment seems to make him unable to enjoy his experiences at the Wakes without her. He is always seen "stuck close to her, bristling with a small boy's pride of her" (*Sons and Lovers*, 8-9). Both William and Paul become overattached to her. William brings gifts from a fair, presents to his mother like a lover. Paul is always with her like her young man. They come to have a mother fixation.

**The Damaging influence of mother fixation:** Mother fixation plays a vital role in damaging the healthy growth of William and Paul when they come to establish a relationship with themselves. On one hand mother is jealous of other women, for example, she does not allow William to have a relationship with Gyp. This results in emotional conflict in William, and finally, he dies. But the damaging effect of the influence of Mrs. Morel is best seen in her relationship with Paul. The influence of the mother on her sons is clear from the start. She dominates and steers their life unconsciously and overwhelmingly. Unconsciously, the Oedipal or Oedipus complex and conflict develop even more with Paul. According to Lois Tyson, if the child never grows out of childhood and adolescence normally, he will fail to be functional in adulthood, as will be discussed later. The complex gets even worse, especially when the abusive father regularly practices violence against the mother as they grow up through the stages of life. Consequently, they become protective of the mother and aggressive against their father. (Tyson 2005, 17)

Mrs. Morel loves Paul more than other children and feels "as if the navel string that had connected its frail body with hers had not been broken". The mother is the very axis and pole of its life. "...he prayed every night, Lord let my father die" (*Sons and Lovers* 72). Paul's love for Miriam is a desperate attempt to free himself from the excessive attachment to his mother, but he cannot give to Miriam what he has already given to his mother and thus, results the terrible and torturing conflict within him, and the disharmony between him and the woman who wants all his love and to whom he can give but half. Mrs. Morel is jealous of Miriam because she will suck all his soul and leave nothing for her. Therefore, she does her best to break up their relationship. It is the dark shadow of mother-image that comes between Paul's relationship with Miriam and spoils that relationship. Paul is conscious of the damaging influence of his mother on him and tells her bitterly. Then she does not want Paul to have a relationship with Miriam, who is also overprotective. As a result, Paul gets sandwiched between the two. But because of his mother's fixation, he could not establish a healthy relationship with her. Paul feels irritated and reacts to his mother: "I shall never meet the right woman as long as you live."

**Paul and Clara's Relationship:** After his relationship with Miriam is ruined, he turns to Clara. Clara is just the opposite of Miriam. But this replacement is as unsatisfying as the previous one, for the dark shadow of mother-image is also there. Paul is incapable of satisfying sexual adjustment owing to his mother fixation. The Oedipus complex in him has weakened him emotionally. Clara makes love to Paul at all hours and all places. He feels disgusted with Clara too. The result is much serious and brings tragedy to his life.

**Conclusion:** The novel *Sons and Lovers* deals basically with the tangle of human relationships, and these relationships have been discussed in the novel on both social and psychological planes. Lawrence, as a visionary, suggests the law of polarity or reconciliation of opposites for self-fulfillment. Each man and woman is unique and has his or her own identity. Unless this is recognized, no healthy relationship can be established. When this aspect of life is not accepted, one becomes dominating, over-possessive, and egoistic. This is the tragedy with Mrs. Morel. She fails to recognize the individual identity of Mr. Morel and her sons. Similarly, Miriam and Clara do not recognize this fact and become over-possessive. This leads to their tragedy. Secondly, Lawrence suggests the reconciliation of the physical and the spiritual. He recognizes the claims both of body and soul. He feels that a healthy sexual relationship should give both physical and spiritual satisfaction. Paul -Miriam -Clara relationships fail because they do not strike a balance between the body and soul. Mrs. Morel and Miriam want to suck up Paul's soul, whereas Clara wants to suck up his whole body.

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