

NON-DUALITY IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S FICTION

Dhanuka Bandara

*Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
malithdhanuka@yahoo.com*

It could be cogently argued that the modernist writing in the first half of the 20th century foreshadows the emergence of post-structuralist and postcolonial theory in the latter half. In my opinion, modernist writing, especially that of James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and to a lesser extent that of T.S. Eliot is a definitive attempt at radically questioning what could be rather broadly described as traditional western metaphysics and epistemology. This compulsion to formulate a transcendental aesthetic - an aesthetic that espouses a radical metaphysic, capable of destabilizing the foundation of western thinking - I believe, was inspired by the First World War and more importantly by the colonial encounter. As Terry Eagleton argues in *The English Novel*, D.H. Lawrence is one of the few, if not the only truly metaphysical novelist in British literature. His aesthetic and metaphysical sensibility is strikingly different from his 19th century predecessors. Although he clearly seems to have inherited the prose style of the Victorian novelists, his sensibility is palpably "non-British," I might even go on to argue that it is decidedly "non-Western." In my paper I contend that the "non-western" sensibility of Lawrence, renders him a critic of colonialism. To claim that Lawrence's work amounts to an outright rejection of colonialism is, perhaps, an overstatement; rather I argue that Lawrence in his works questions western metaphysics, thus indirectly challenging western colonialism which is structured around the metaphysical axis of western civilization.

The colonial affiliations of D.H. Lawrence are rather well known. After a visit to Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, he infamously described Buddhist temples as "rat holes". Despite this disparaging comment, Lawrence's writing unmistakably evince the influence of Buddhism and to a much greater extent that of the *Upanishads*. It is through Arthur Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* that the *Upanishads* reached Lawrence. The idea of non-duality, which is the essence of the *Upanishads* and *Advaita Vedanta*, was a crucial influence on Schopenhauer's idealism and in turn on Lawrence's metaphysical writing. It is the most fundamental of all dualities *i.e.*, Self/Other, that Vedanta philosophy and that of Schopenhauer's bring to crisis. The annihilation of the Self is an interesting thrust that could be discerned in Lawrence's writing. For instance in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, sex is seeing as a deconstructive gesture that brings to crisis the Self/Other duality. Thus orgasm becomes the deconstructive moment at which the dualities cease to exist and become one. The same idea could be found in *Women in Love*, especially in the way Lawrence depicts the relationship between Rupert Burkin and Ursula. The idea of non-duality is almost ubiquitous in D.H. Lawrence's works. It is this questioning of dualities that renders Lawrence's metaphysic, a critique of traditional western metaphysics.

I wish to elaborate on this aspect of Lawrence's writing in my paper. I will attempt to undertake a philosophical and literary analysis of Lawrence's texts such as *The Rainbow*, *The Plumed Serpent* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in order to discuss the radical metaphysic of D.H. Lawrence. To this end, I will draw on methods of deconstruction proposed by Fredrick Nietzsche (*The Birth of Tragedy*) and Jacques Derrida (*Positions, Of Grammatology*), whose philosophical forefather is Schopenhauer. I will also attempt to point at the ambitious and exciting possibility of tracing the antecedents of "deconstruction" in Indian philosophy.