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Aristocracy of man in the novel of D. H. Lawrence -The plumed Serpent.

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Abstract - Relationship between man-to-man and man to universe is also one of the important themes of Lawrence novels. His novel 'The Plumed Serpent' is regarded as the fictional version of Lawrence's theory of aristocracy power of man to transform the world. Lawrence believed that creative motives are the first motive of all human activities. Man is not confined to one direction only. Besides the sexual instinct of man which is important but is not predominant, man has his creative or religious instinct too. Ramon as an aristocrat was the main character of this novel who wants the Christian Church to stop imposing an alien religion on the Mexican people and support for a universal church of all religions. That must be like 'a big tree under which every man who acknowledges the greater life of the soul can sit and be refreshed. Thus, he tried to transformed the lives of the Mexican Indians by motivating them to get into contact with the source of life through self-realization. The current study emphasizes on relationship of men to society for some great creative or religious or constructive activity.

Keywords - Human, Religion, Relationship, Soul.

The Plumed Serpent may be regarded as the fictional version of Lawrence's theory of man-to-man and man to universe relationship. Don Ramon of The Plumed Serpent is considered as an aristocrat, the Lawrence 'Super man', who has realized his real self:

Because, admitting his blood unison, Ramon at the same time claimed a supremacy, even a godliness. He was a man, as the lowest of his peons was a man. At the same time, rising from the same pool of blood, from the same roots of manhood as they, and being, as they were, a man of the pulsing blood, he was still something more. Neither in the blood nor in the spirit lay his individuality and his supremacy, his godhead. But in a star within him, an inexplicable star which rose out of the dark sea and shone between the flood and the great sky. The mysterious star which unites the vast universal blood with the universal breath of the spirit, and shines between them both.

Not the rider on the white horse: nor the rider on the red. That which is beyond the riders and the horses, the inexplicable mystery of the star whence no horseman comes and to which no horseman can arrive. The star which is a man's innermost clue, which rules the power of the blood on the one hand, and the power of the spirit on the other.

For this, the only thing which is supreme above all power in a man, and at the same time, is power, which far transcends knowledge: the strange star between the sky and the waters of the first cosmos: this is man's divinity.

(Emphasis mine)

Ramon's meditations and his prayers remind us of the Hindu Yogis. He is capable of achieving a complete stillness of mind that enables him to reach the state of timelessness. This state of timelessness frees him from the conditioning of not only his own past but also the past of his whole race, thus enabling him to see into the true nature of things in the living present.

Invisible in the characters, he stood soft and relaxed, staring with the wide eyes at the dark fecundity of the inner tide washing over his heart, over his belly, his mind dissolved away in the greater, dark mind, which is undisturbed by thoughts.

He covered his face with his hands, and stood still, in pure unconsciousness, neither hearing nor feeling nor knowing, like a dark sea weed deep in the sea. With no time and no world, in the deeps that are timeless and worldless.

(Emphasis mine)

His prayer is not the prayer of a self-proclaiming sinner begging for his sins to be forgiven by an invisible God or a historical Christ. His prayer is the prayer of a self-realized soul who is a God is, here and now:

Then Ramon's voice was heard, and the men were suddenly silent, listening with bent heads. Ramon sat with his face lifted, looking far away, in the pride of prayer.

'There is no before and after, there is only Now', he said, speaking in a proud, but inward voice.

'The great Snake coils and uncoils the plasma of his folds, and stare appear, and worlds fade out. It is no more than the changing and easing of the plasma.....

'And the perfect sleep of the Snake I am is the plasm of a man, who is whole.

'When the plasm of the body, and the plasm of the soul, and the plasm of the spirit are at one, in the Snake I am.

'I am now.

'Was not is a dream, and shall be is a dream, like two separate, heavy feet.

'But Now, I am.

He can dive deep into the oblivion and come up again after rest and renewal. In his meditations he looks into the heart of the cosmos and his 'manhood' is fulfilled. He receives his 'power' and his

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strength from the cosmos:

He was looking into the heart of the world; because the faces of men, and the hearts of men are helpless quicksand's. Only in the heart of the Cosmos man can look for strength. And if he can keep his soul in touch with the heart of the world, then from the heart of the world new blood will beat in strength and stillness into him, fulfilling his manhood.

Ramon hates mental attachment, which he calls 'intimacy', to persons and things. He practices non-attachment in personal and social relations:

He had to meet them on another plane, where the contact was different; intangible remote, and without intimacy. His soul was concerned elsewhere. So that the quick of him need not be bound to anybody. The quick of a man must turn to God alone: in some way or other.

With Cipriano (his friend and disciple) he was most sure. Cipriano and he, even when they embraced each other with passion, when they met after an absence, embraced in the recognition of each other's eternal and abiding loneliness; like the morning star.

He has all the attributes of a Superman, the one whom the Hindu would call a 'Karma Yogi'. Only such a man has true wisdom and is qualified to guide others. Don Ramon wants to transform the Mexican Indians and establish a new social system in Mexico upon the living religious faculty in men. He calls his integral self his "whole manhood". Having found his own "whole manhood", he endeavors to awaken every Mexican man to his own manhood and every Mexican Woman to her own womanhood. He believes that man gets the wholeness of his being from God. When people lose their connection with God, they lose the wholeness of their being. He sees hope in the Mexican Indians as, perhaps, they are not too hardened in their mental conceit. He uses the Quetzalcoatl myth for establishing "a new connection between the people and God". To his wife, Carlota, who is also the greatest critic of his Quetzalcoatl religion, he says:

"Quetzalcoatl is just a living word, for these people, no more. All I want them to do is to find the beginnings of the way to their own manhood, their own womanhood. Men are not yet men in full, and women are not yet women. They are all half and half, incoherent, part horrible, part pathetic, part good creatures. Half arrived- I mean you as well Carlota. I mean the entire world. But these people do not assert any righteousness of their own, these Mexican people of ours. That makes me think that grace is still with them. And so having got hold of some kind of clue to my own whole manhood, it is part of me to try with them.

Ramon believes that the leader should not depend on the support of the masses, nor should he seek the support of the masses. Authority and obedience should depend on the recognition by men of each other's soul power: "We will be masters among men, and lords among men. But lords of men and masters of men we will not be". It is Don Ramon's soul power that compels obedience from his friend and disciple, General Cipriano:

'How not believe? I not believe in Ramon? - Well, perhaps not, in that way of kneeling before him

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and spreading out my arms and shedding tears on his feet. But I believe in him, too. Not in your way, but in mine. I tell you why. Because he has the power to compel me. If he hands not the power to compel me, how should I believe?

‘It is a queer sort of belief that is compelled’, she said.

‘How else should one believe, except by being compelled? When I grew up, and my god father (a Bishop) could not compel me to believe, I was very unhappy. It made me very unhappy. But Ramon compels me, and that is very good. It makes me very happy, when I know I can’t escape’.

Ramon wants the Christian Church to stop imposing an alien religion on the Mexican people. He tells the Bishop that the Christian church is just one among many churches, but it is hostile to other churches of the world. There must be a universal church of all religions. It must be like ‘a big tree under which every man who acknowledges the greater life of the soul can sit and be refreshed’. The final mystery, according to Ramon, is one mystery, but the manifestations of this mystery are many. He resurrects the old god of Mexico and gives it a new meaning. The religion of Quetzalcoatl, the ‘Lord of Two Ways’, is a way of life which involves a connection between the Conscious and Unconscious levels of existence. He gives the Mexican people new rituals to perform and new hymns to sing-the rituals and hymns that they can understand. However, Quetzalcoatl is to him only the symbol of the best a Mexican man may be in the future. The Christian Church does not possess the key word to the Mexican soul. Mexicans must have their own God:”God must come to Mexico in a blanket and in huaraches, else he is no God of the Mexicans. They cannot know him. Naked all men are but men. But the touch, the look, the word that goes from one naked man to another is the mystery of living. We live by manifestations”. But he tries, as far as possible, to spread his message without arousing resistance or hate. When Cipriano wants to ‘meet metal with metal’, and suggests that Montes, the President of the Republic, should be asked to declare the ‘Religion of Quetzalcoatl’ as the religion of Mexico and then back up the declaration with the army Ramon says:” But, no! no! let it spread of itself”.

It is true that Cipriano executes the bandits and murderers gruesomely, and Ramon approves of these executions. The description of these executions may be repugnant to many readers of the novel. But it is a fact, as has been pointed out by L.D. Clark, that these bandits and murderers “would suffer death by condemnation in most societies”. Moreover, the way these criminal killers of men are executed may be regarded as a ritual that the Mexican peon could understand, and which could be replaced, with the passage of time, by another ritual for the same purpose.

Ramon is not interested in politics, which he regards as trivial. He is interested in life; and politics cannot give life.

‘Politics and all this social religion that Montes has got is like washing the outside of the egg, to make it look clean. But I, myself, I want to get inside the egg, right to the middle, to start it growing into a new bird.... The United States can not die, because it is not alive. It is a netful of China eggs, made of

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pot. So they can be kept clean. But here, Cipriano, here, let us hatch the chick before we start cleaning up the nest.

‘We’ve got to open the oyster of the cosmos, and get our manhood out of it’.

Ideals cannot save humanity. Christ is an ideal. Socialism and liberty are also ideals. Humanity can neither be saved by Christ, nor by materialistic ideals like ‘Socialism’ or ‘liberty’:

“But believe me, if the real Christ has not been able to save Mexico and He hasn’t then I am sure the white Anti-Christ of charity, and socialism, and politics, and reform, will only succeed in finally destroying her. That, and that alone makes me take my stand. You, Carlota, with your charity works and your pity: and men like Benits Juarez, with their Reform and their Liberty: and the rest of the benevolent people, politicians and socialists and so forth, surcharged with pity for living men, in their mouths, but really with hate the hate of the materialist have notes for the materialist haves: they are the Anti-Christ”.

Julian Moynahan Wonders how Ramon (“this idle, intensely vain hidalgo”) is going to solve the problems of food, housing and education of the Mexicans. There is a definite answer to this question in the book. The wants of man can never be totally satisfied. Material desires are hydras-headed. As soon as one want is satisfied, another crops up in its place. In solving one problem, the conditioned man creates ten more problems. Life itself has the power to solve the genuine problems of man including the problems of food and shelter. Men must fight for life and for nothing else. Ramon writes to the socialists and agitators:

“Let us seek life where it is to be found, And, having found it, life will solve the problems. But every time we deny the living life, in order to solve a problem, we cause ten problems to spring up where was one before. Solving the problems of the people, we lose the people in a poisonous forest of problems.... When men seek life first, they will not seek land nor gold....

‘Seek life, and life will bring the change.....

‘Lay forcible hands on nothing, only be ready to resist, if forcible hands should be laid on you. For the new shoots of life are tender, and better ten deaths than that they should be torn or trampled down by the bullies of the world”.

And where to find life? Life is found in every living being. Life is found in every living man and every living woman. And the source of life is in the soul of man, and the soul of woman. Cipriano tells his men that they “must march to life”. They must acquire “the second strength”⁶. Hitherto they have known only one strength “the strength which is the strength of oxen and mules and iron, of machines and guns, and of men who cannot get the second strength”. The Europeans and the Americans have also acquired a ‘second strength’, but it is the strength of the mind, which enables them to manufacture goods and guns. The Mexicans must acquire a different ‘second strength’- the strength that comes from the soul. Cyprian speaks to his men!

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‘Are we men? Can we not get the second strength? Can we not? Have we lost it forever?’

‘I say no! Quetzalcoatl is among us. I have found the red Huitzilopochtli: The second strength!’

‘When you walk or sit, when you work or lie down, when you eat or sleep, think of the second strength, that you must have it.’

‘Be very quiet. It is shy as a bird in a dark tree.’

‘Be very clean, clean in your bodies and your clothes. It is like a star, that will not shine in direct.’

‘Be very brave and do not drink till you are drunk, nor soil yourself with bad women. Because a drunken man has lost his second strength, and a man loses his second strength in bad women, and a thief is a coward, and the red Huitzilopochtli hates a coward.’

It is a Yogi’s prescription for self-realization. Even a layman among the Hindus can read this ‘prescription’. The emphasis in this speech is clearly on the control of the senses and the stillness of the mind.

Ramon, like Lawrence himself, believes that the greatest service that a man can do to his fellowmen is to help them to get into contact with the source of life through self-realization. How far he succeeds in transforming the lives of the Mexican Indians has been left unsaid in the book. Ramon knows that the task is formidable; and he has only been able to make a beginning: “I do what I believe in. Possibly I am only the first step round the corner of change”. But he, like Lawrence, is convinced that men can truly meet only on the religious plane.

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