



**THE THEME OF THE DEHUMANIZING IMPACT OF  
INDUSTRIALIZATION IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S  
WOMEN IN LOVE**

**KAMEL HEZAM ALI MOQBEL**  
Ph.D Researcher, S.R.T.M. University,  
Nanded, Maharashtra

**DR. RAJKUMAR M. LAKHADIVE**  
Ph. D Guide, S.R.T.M. University,  
Nanded, Maharashtra

**ABSTRACT**

*Women in Love explores the dehumanizing process of industrialization. It focuses on the individual's search for fulfillment in a world that becomes meaningless and devoid of human values. It shows the sense of alienation that result from modern civilization. Lawrence calls the industrial system "the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of mechanical principle for the organic." Lawrence believes that the development of industrialism is the main reason for the disintegration of the human race. He expresses his point of view through Birkin , his mouthpiece, who says that the machine works man instead of he the machine. This destructive element controls man's being so he denies and is driven towards death. Gerald exemplifies this very clearly. He is an industrial magnate. Gerald Crich embodies European industrial civilization and its associated values. The private and public themes meet in Gerald. He involves exploitation in his relationships with Gudrun and Birkin and his workers. This is characteristic of an industrial magnate who makes use of others, the workers. Gerald's death wish is related to his position in society as an owner of a colliery. The novel ends with his tragic death in the snow. His death in freeze symbolizes the failure of this civilization to have any contact with warmth and life source.*

**1- The dehumanizing impact of industrialization in Women in Love:**

Elizabeth Brody Tenenbaum in his book *The Problematic Approaches to Identity* writes:

*Women in Love* is a novel about the plight of the individual who finds himself in a society that he can neither accept nor change

Frank N. Magill says that the book is about:

... the conflict between the mechanical will and the organic ones of being, between the flux of corruption or death and the regenerative forces of life



The symbolic chapter "The Industrial Magnate" gives a full picture of capitalism. The workers are presented as passive and exploited victims. The owners are represented as devoid of humanity. Capitalism represents a perfect system of production but at the same time it is self-destructive. Lawrence's peculiar genius enables him to describe vivid English scenes grasping their beauty. And he also describes the ugliness of colliery towns that spoil and blacken the countryside. He expresses his discontent with his contemporary civilization.

Gerald is presented as the god of the machine, and workmen as mere insignificant instruments. In the chapter "The Industrial Magnate", a shopkeeper describes how as a child Gerald used to "kick, and scream, and struggle like a demon." (p.219). Gerald is, in fact, the central symbol of the human death drive. In Gerald the will for chaos is rationalized into a will for power. He has a vision of power. He looked upon the miners as his instruments. What matters most to him is efficiency in work. The sufferings and feelings of the miners do not matter in the least. For him man is defined by the work he does, not by his feelings. There is no room for human emotions in him. What matters is the pure instrumentality of the individual:

"Everything in the world has its functions, and is good or not good in so far as it fulfills that function more or less perfectly. Was a miner a good miner? Then he was complete. Was a manager a good manager? That was enough. Gerald himself, who was responsible for all this industry, was he a good director? If he were, he had fulfilled his life. The rest was by-play." (pp.230-31).

Gerald is represented as a typical egocentric person who only thinks of himself and his own wants and does not consider other people, and expects those around him to serve him. His egocentric will expresses itself in the mechanization of both the work and the lives of the miners. What he wants is the fulfillment of his will in the struggle with the conditions of life. He does not care about money fundamentally. For him, everything including man is measured as per its functionality. That is the value of man is measured according to how useful he is or how many functions he can perform. Gerald exercises his will to impose a mechanical intellectual order upon human feelings. "His will was now to take the coal out of earth, profitably. The profit was the condition of victory, but the victory itself lay in the feat achieved (p.231).

In Gerald's eyes, the mines are run on an old system. During the period of his father, Thomas Crich, the pits were like a sinking ship. It must be overhauled in order to increase the output of the mines. Therefore, Gerald decides to examine it carefully and thoroughly and make many changes in it in order to improve it. Gerald is explicit about his intention to overhaul the whole system which Gerald thinks that it has run its course and is in dire need of an overhaul and redirection. So he conducts a modernizing campaign. He is interested in the



technicalities of modern coal-mining, and in pulling as much coal as possible from the pits. First, he makes a detailed study and an accurate assessment of the current conditions of the mines. He gathered the whole situation into his mind. Then, he decides to modernize the mines system, replacing the old equipments and methods with new ones. He sets himself to work, to put the great industry in order. He introduces all sorts of changes. He rushes into the reform of the firm. He looked at the whole democratic-equality problem as a problem of silliness. This means that Gerald represents only the economically exploiting aspect of capitalism, and he denies good side aspect of capitalism that is democracy. Lawrence here criticizes, through Gerald, those capitalists who put into practice what is of use for them and, and reject that humanitarian part of capitalism such as democracy and equality. So Gerald puts his philosophy into practice.

Gerald begins to implement his reforms of the firm in the office. The first thing he thinks of is how to reduce the expenditures as much as possible to save money. It was needful to economize severely, to make possible the great alteration he must introduce (p. 237). He makes cuts from the expenditures. His treacherous genius is revealed here. He makes many deductions from the workers' wages in a very delicate narrow limited way that they hardly notice them. Here he is depicted as a deceiving employer. He asks that the widows have to pay for their coals, saying:

They must pay cost price henceforward. The firm is not a charity institution, as everybody seems to think (p. 238).

Lawrence describes Gerald's measure in this regard as follows:

In a thousand ways he cut down the expenditure, in ways so fine as to be hardly noticeable to the men. The miners must pay for the cartage of their coals, heavy cartage, too; they must pay for their tools, for the sharpening, for the care of lamps, for many trifling things that made the bill of charges against every man mount up to a shilling or so in a week. It was not grasped very definitely by the miners, though they were sore enough. But it saved hundreds of pounds every week for the firm. (p.238).

The miners are, in a sense, his own men. But he sees them as objects and tools rather than as men, as parts of the pit rather than as parts of life, and as crude raw phenomena rather than as human being along with him. It seems as if the devil himself had let him all the fiend's wits.

Then he begins his great reform. He appoints expert engineers in every department. An enormous electric plant is installed. New machinery is brought from America. The miners are



not familiar with these new equipments. They have never seen such devices before. The way in which Gerald implements his reforms is described as follows:

New machines were brought from America, such as the miners had never seen before, great iron men, as the cutting machines were called, and unusual appliances. The working of the pits was thoroughly changed, all the control was taken out of the hands of the miners, the butty system was abolished. Everything was run on the most accurate and delicate scientific method, educated and expert men were in control everywhere, the miners were reduced to mere mechanical instruments. They had to work hard, much harder than before, the work was terrible and heart-breaking in its mindlessness (p.238).

The description above is one of the most powerful passages in the novel. As a result of the new system, the miners are reduced to the inferior state of "mere mechanical instruments", while the new machines are given the name "great iron men". His measures to modernize his firm are inhuman. He pensions off the old managers, the old clerks with no emotional qualms, when they are no longer of use to him.

The whole concern seemed like a hospital of invalid employers. He arranged what pensions were necessary, he looked for efficient substitutes, and when they were found, he substituted them for the old hands (p.237).

He substitutes clever young fellows for the old hands. The small conversation that takes place between Gerald and his father concerning one of the pensioned employees reveals Gerald's material thinking:

'I've a pitiful letter here from Letherinton,' his father would say, in a tone of deprecation and appeal. 'Don't you think the poor fellow might keep on a little longer. I always fancied he did very well.'

'I've got a man in his place now, father. He'll be happier out of it, believe me. You think his allowance is plenty, don't you?'

'It is not the allowance that he wants, poor man. He feels it very much, that he is superannuated. He says he thought he had twenty more years of work in himself.'

'Not of this kind of work I want. He doesn't understand.' (p. 237).



The new machines-iron men-come between Gerald and the miners as the vehicles of a mutual destructiveness. The negative effects of Gerald's system are revealed, and their response to them is of considerable significance. The new order is destructive for the miners. The joy went out of their lives, the hope seemed to perish as they became more and more mechanized (p.238). In spite of these destructive effects of this inhuman terrible order, the miners accept it with subjection and self-destruction. They take the new conditions as taken for granted, as their fate out of which they cannot escape. Lawrence criticizes the miners' submissive attitude towards the injustice that is imposed by the new order and its holder, Gerald. It seems that they all have been tamed to submit to it without raising a finger of resistance. They accept to be the same as the mechanized machines without feelings and emotions. Each man is a machine-part. The description of the whole system is a perfect description of the industrial capitalism.

Gerald represents the factory-owner's ideal in a nutshell. The miners represent the rock-bottom of the society, the bottom that has no bottom. Gerald, who represents the bourgeois in a capitalist system, pretends the logical mind and, thus, imposes his ideas on the other segments of the society. He decides to rule the roost by forcing certain ideas and authority upon those below him without giving them the right of choice or even the right of objection. Gerald considers himself as the absolute mind while the others as dribbling cretins. He shows an astounding ingenuity and uncanny shrewdness of modern technical mind. Thus, the logical premises, this up-down imposition of capitalism, must create the miners' outrage and hatred of their employers. The accumulation of this hatred and outrage are supposedly to be expressed in the form of violence. But, on the contrary, the miners' hatred is here suppressed. Though they at first hate Gerald Crich, wishing him murdered, their hatred remains in their hearts, instead of putting it into action. Instead of showing resistance, they show some fatal satisfaction even though it destroys them. In spite of the clear-cut division in the society into the aristocratic greedy mine-owners and the working miners, Lawrence sees no foreboding danger of revolution in Gerald's society. The working class people live in a terrible humiliating conditions, yet they are not serious in their attitude towards life. They do just what they like. The men spend their money carelessly on themselves, clothes, smoking and drinking. The following passage shows the destructive aspects of the industrial system and the miners' response to such inhuman system:

But they submitted to it all. The joy went out of their lives, the hope seemed to perish as they became more and more mechanized. And yet they accepted the new conditions. They even got a further satisfaction out of them. At first they hated Gerald Crich, they swore to do something to him, to murder him. But as time went on, they accepted everything with some fatal satisfaction. Gerald was their high priest, he represented the



religion they really felt. His father was forgotten already. There was a new world, a new order, strict, terrible, inhuman, but satisfying in its very destructiveness. The men were satisfied to belong to the great and wonderful machine, even whilst it destroyed them. It was what they wanted. It was the highest that man had produced, the most wonderful and superhuman. They were exalted by belonging to this great and superhuman system which was beyond feeling or reason, something really godlike. Their hearts died within them, but their souls were satisfied. It was what they wanted. Otherwise Gerald could never have done what he did. He was just ahead of them in giving them what they wanted, this participation in a great and perfect system that subjected life to pure mathematical principles. This was a sort of freedom, the sort they really wanted. It was the first great step in undoing, the first great phase of chaos, the substitution of the mechanical principle for the organic, the destruction of the organic purpose, the organic unity, and the subordination of every organic unity to the great mechanical purpose. It was pure organic disintegration and pure mechanical organization. This is the first and finest state of chaos (pp.238-39).

Lawrence appears more critical of the working class in his *Lady Chatterley's Lover* than in his *Women in Love*. The chapter "Industrial Magnate" in *Women in Love* is the equivalent of the ninth chapter in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

## 2-The Employer-Employee Relationship:

Lawrence criticizes the relationship between the employer and his employees. It is an employer-employee relationship that is based on the domination on the employer's part and the submission on the employees'. Lawrence hates the machine and his contempt is shown in the treatment of Gerald and the miners' submissive response. In Lawrence's opinion, Gerald could never have done what he did, if the miners had resisted their being exploited by Gerald to his own ends. He feels a new sense of power flowing through him over all his men. Industry has witnessed a rebirth in his hands. A new life comes into the pits, after it had been gradually dying during his father. He managed to subjugate those who are nearest to him in the same way as he managed to subjugate the mare and the rabbit to his will. Lawrence believes that industry destroys the organic unity of the human being and the spontaneous self. Lawrence, all his life, hated industrialism and machinery, and, consequently, he hated democracy. He hated that kind of democracy that is based on mathematical principles, the democracy of pocket, a false egalitarianism inspired by envy and hypocrisy. He substituted his misanthropy for his father's philanthropy.



As a result of his managerial ideas and industrial modernization, Gerald succeeds to achieve his ends as there is a greater output of coal than ever. He thinks that he wins his victory. The wonderful system runs almost perfectly. He finally feels triumphant. He has fulfilled his own life-long aim, yet he has his own Achilles heel which is his inner inadequacy, his extreme need of woman, Gudrun, that leads him to his own doom. His success is made in one direction to the furthest extent, while his centers of feeling are drying up. He is the embodiment of will-power. He has the qualities needed for success in industry but he also fails in his relationship with other men and women and the universe. He, thus, lacks emotional depth and the capacity for sincere relationships and tenderness to which Lawrence attaches much importance in life. In spite of Gerald's success in his material life, he suffers a subsequent want of purpose in his life after he reached the summit of success in industry. One of the ironies of the novel is that Gerald who is the inventor and god of the whole industrial system is as much a victim of industrialism as his men. Gerald's strength is a mechanical strength, a strength of will-power and ideals. Gerald begins to go soft and weak inwardly as pulp, but he begins also to be effective outwardly. He becomes aware of the outside things, while he ignores himself and his spiritual needs. He has not the inner reserve to meet the mounting crisis of his life, and he moves forward to his final destruction.

Gerald is now drifting off to his industrial activity. He becomes a man, with much substance of money and riches. His success in the pits is an exterior shell of steel, like machines, but his inner self is a weak soft pulp. His inner weak void pulpy part depends on Gudrun. The emotional human part of him needs her as a child needs his mother, otherwise he would be lost as an idiot on a moor. His uncanny material power over the miners is useless in his emotional conflict with Gudrun. This amazingly astute and powerful man is almost an idiot when left alone to his emotional life. The modern industrial world has only vulgarized emotion. It is a world of iron and coal. The cruelty of iron and the smoke of coal, and the endless greed that drove it all Gerald becomes so wealthy, yet he is afraid of death. He feels his energy is energyless.

Gerald is the god of the machine. Yet he is not a machine. He is just a human being. He feels that he had reached the final phase of his success by making his system perfect. He thinks that there is no other place beyond where he arrived in and, thus, feels that he would break down one day because life was becoming meaningless. He makes himself efficient and the colliers respect him as they did not respect his father. But his strength is not real strength. The world of work had left Gerald in a state of depression. He lets the machine eat up his strength and vitality. He feels a vacuum within himself. He has been reduced by the machine to a more intense and less human being. Strength and tenderness do not coexist in Gerald.

Industry weakens sexuality in Gerald. He represents a category of modern men who suffer sexual failure, but this kind of failure is only a part of more general massive failure. Gerald's



success in the world of work and material life results in his inner weakness and slow disintegration. One of the corollaries of the strain caused by modern industrial life is his incapacity for true love. Gerald's slow disintegration and his spiritual void in his life are completely uncovered by his father's death. His will-power is powerless to fill this gap in his inner self. He fears that his face in the mirror is a mask and that his eyes are bubbles that will burst in a moment and "leave clear annihilation.". His life, dedicated to output, is sterile. His "centers of feelings were drying up". The following extract shows the terrible state Gerald reached in spite of his success in the world of industry:

But now he had succeeded-he had finally succeeded. And once or twice lately, when he was alone in the evening and had nothing to do, he had suddenly stood up in terror, not knowing what he was. And he went to the mirror and looked long and closely at his own face, at his own eyes, seeking for something. He was afraid, in mortal dry fear, but he knew not what of. He looked at his own face. There it was, shapely and healthy, and the same as ever, yet somehow, it was not real, it was a mask. He dare not touch it, for fear it should prove to be only a composition mask. His eyes were blue and keen as ever, and as firm in their look. Yet he was not sure that they were not blue false bubbles that would burst in a moment and leave clear annihilation. He could see the darkness in them. He was afraid that one day he would break down and be a purely meaningless bubble lapping round a darkness (p. 240).

Gerald's life becomes a growing strain. It lacks equilibrium. It is a development in one material direction, yet it is a retreat backward in several other directions. His mind is very active, but his spirit is in a state of depression.

### **Conclusion:**

The theme of the dehumanizing impact of industrialization is discussed in some detail in this article. The novel represents the twentieth-century England modern civilization. *Women in Love* is full, perhaps too full, of talk about ideas particularly the idea of the fundamental nature of modern Western civilization, which emerges as central determining assumption from which most of the developments of the action stem. Lawrence detects certain destructive tendencies in his society. He isolates and magnifies these tendencies, predicts their outcome, then emerges an essentially apocalyptic vision with the particular segment of historical time he has in hand. For Lawrence, as for great many other European artists of the period, industry came as the greatest shock of his entire life. He loathed the negative impact of industry, utterly disbelieved in the necessity of it. The vision of society-as-death reflects the cycle of destruction through which Europe was passing between 1914 and 1918.





Lawrence's revulsion from his fellow man in wartime comes through in Birkin's gloating fantasies of the beauty of a world from which all traces of homo sapiens have been eliminated, and in Loerke's nihilistic fantasies of a superbomb that could split the world in two. It focuses on showing the brutality and bestiality of industry that makes the world of individual and society meaningless and devoid of human values. Lawrence shows his criticism of negative aspects of industrialism in several ways. In addition to Gerald, his criticism of modern industrial civilization is seen in Birkin's attack on the English society of his time. Birkin is repelled by the mechanized, social, emotional wilderness of the modern world, and by the disappearance of clear significance and purpose in living. This feeling of rebellion is accompanied by a deep sense of dislike for the whole social structure of England.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Magill, Frank. English Novel: Conrad to Woolf. California: Salem Press, 1986.
- Pattanaik, Dr. Ashok. D.H. Lawrence: A Critical Study. NEW DELHI: Omega Publications, 2013.
- Sen, Dr. S. D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love: A Critical Evaluation. New Delhi: Unique Publishers, N.D.
- Tenenbaum, Elizabeth Broody. The Problematic Approaches to Identity. London: Penguin, 1999.