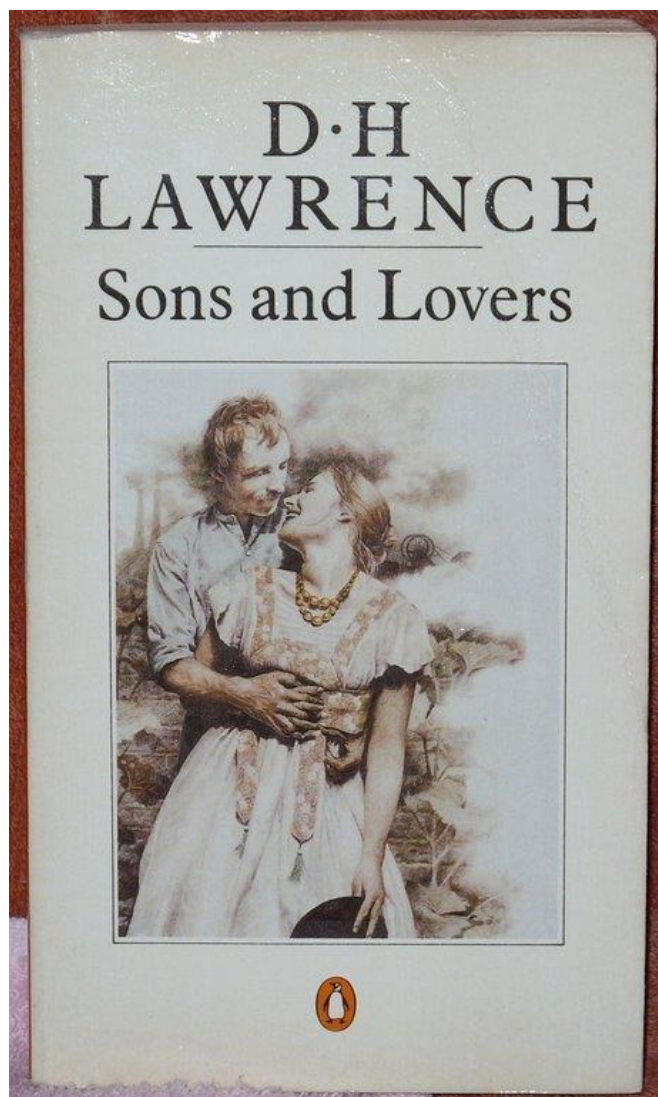


Gender Discrimination in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

K. Aarthi and M. Lakshmi Prabha



Abstract

The story centres on the worldly problem of gender discrimination. Lawrence's fiction is always marked by the conflict of a duality in the characters. This duality is seen in the division of body and soul. Also this division marks initially a strong preference by the author for soulful women who are always stronger than their partners. He still has doubts

concerning which is the ideal partner, a man or a woman. Soul and body are still divided in the fateful patterns laid down in *Sons and Lovers*.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, masculinity, feminism, culture.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is the idea and situation that women and men are not equal. Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals wholly or partly due to their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; gender binary systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed.

D. H. Lawrence



D. H. Lawrence

Courtesy: <https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/david-herbert-richards-lawrence-1116.php>

David Herbert Lawrence (11 September 1885-2 March 1930) was an English novelist, poet playwright, essayist, literary critic and painter. His collected works represent, among other things, an extended reflection upon the dehumanising effects of modernity and industrialisation. Some of the issues Lawrence explores are sexuality, emotional health, vitality, spontaneity and instinct.

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His notable works are *Sons and lovers*, *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love*, *John Thomas and Lady Jane*, *Lady Thomas and lady Jane*, *Lady Chatterley 's lover* and other short stories are *Odour of chrysan the mums*, *The virgin and the gypsy*, *The rocking-horse winner*.

Cambridge critic F. R. Leavis championed Lawrence's artistic integrity and his moral seriousness, placing much of Lawrence's fiction within the canonical "great tradition of the English novel". Lawrence used "Men and women relationship" theme on most of his works. After he published "*the white peacock*" novel, his mother died of cancer. He is in depression after his mother's death for few months.

Sons and Lovers

It is clear that Lawrence had an extremely close relationship with his mother, and his grief became a major turning point in his life, just as the death of Mrs. Morel is a major turning point in his autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers*, a work that draws upon much of the writer's provincial upbringing. Essentially concerned with the emotional battle for Lawrence's love between his mother and Miriam, the novel also documents Paul's brief intimate relationship with Miriam that Lawrence had finally initiated in the Christmas of 1909, ending it in August 1910.

The novel focuses on two things:

1. Emotional love between children and mother, and 2. Gender discrimination between Walter Morel and Mrs. Gertrude Morel. After her married life Gertrude Morel suffers a lot physically and mentally.

D. H. Lawrence presents many issues in the novel *Sons and Lovers*. Here, we discuss the gender discrimination in the novel focusing on Mrs. Morel and her sufferings.

The novel *Sons and Lovers* was banned for a number of years because of the complex and complicated relationship of mother and sons portrayed in it. Society has fixed notions how a mother should be in family and in society but D. H. Lawrence attempted to portray the mother figure in a different way.

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Gender Discrimination and Feminism

This novel not only comes under the topic of gender discrimination but also it deals with Feminism. Society does not give equal rights for men and women. There is a gender inequality still in the world. By using hermeneutics of suspicion, literary critics hope to reveal how women are marginalized in the language of literature.

Victim of Patriarchal Society

Now, in *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs. Morel is a victim of the patriarchal society and places stones in Paul's life road to success, to some extent. Mrs. Morel, who came from a mid-capitalist class, is a woman of knowledge. From very young days, she has been struggling against patriarchal society, longing to become an authoritative, independent and responsible person. In the industrial atmosphere in England, in the man-centred family, her husband treated her sadistically. Mrs. Morel also suffered financially, physically and mentally. So, her love goes to her children side. She wants to make her children more intelligent and give respect to women and she wants to give good future to her children. She believes her dream and ambition would come true.

Son, Paul

Mrs. Morel's existence is the only support to Paul's life road to become an artist. Paul's relationship with Gertrude is disturbingly passionate. He hates his father and dreams of living exclusively with his mother. She encourages his art, education and social advancement. In many ways, Mrs. Morel embodies the Victorian concept of the ideal mother. She lives for her sons and will do anything to see them make their way in the world. Paul's life is just beginning at the novel's end.

Belief in Male Supremacy

D. H. Lawrence believed in male supremacy and that is why he wrote that "as a matter of fact unless a woman is held by man, safe within the bounds of belief, she becomes inevitably a destructive force". Simone de Beauvoir terms this attitude "Bourgeois conception" and states that Lawrence rediscovers this conception that woman should subordinate her existence to that of man. Lawrence defines that Mrs. Morel came from rich

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family after marriage. Walter Morel is a coal miner. So he earns not enough salary but that is not a matter - there is no love between them for long. So, this is the reason of failure of their marriage life. She got disappointed. So, her love turns to children. She wants to bring up her children like a gentleman not like her husband.

Mother's Possessiveness

In one occasion, Paul wants Miriam but Mrs. Morel refuses that he should marry her. She also does the same thing for William. She wants William to be a gentleman unlike his father. Her possessiveness becomes clearer when a girl comes to meet William and Mrs. Morel replies "I don't approve of the girls my son meets at dances"(S&L 83). About Miriam Mrs. Morel states that "she's not like an ordinary woman, who can leave my share on him (Paul) ... she will suck him up"(S&L 296).

Through this possessiveness, Mrs. Morel makes Paul realize that "I never shall meet the right woman while you (Mrs. Morel) live"(S&L376). In this novel, D. H. Lawrence has portrayed women, specially Mrs. Morel with all the weaknesses like nagging, making the sons as husband substitute, etc. After all these discussions, it is quite clear that Mrs. Morel is the victim of one man and therefore can only live out her life through for her son's future. Mrs. Morel is defined by men as their "other" and thus, is marginalized textually as well as socially and sexually.

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