



Comparative Analysis in Symbols: D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and Rumi's Mystical Poetry

Dolat Khan¹, Sami Ullah Khan², Mubarak Ali Lashari³

¹Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences,
Uthal, Pakistan
registrar@ug.edu.pk

²Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences,
Uthal, Pakistan
Sami.eng@luawms.edu.pk

³Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan
mubarak.lashari@usindh.edu.pk

*Corresponding authors

Abstract

There is an unending critical chasm regarding the roots of Lawrence's strange theology of 'dark gods'. His fiction such as Women in Love reveals a pretentious and dull world of extended symbols. Most prominent symbols are associated with sexual contents where characters are acutely aware of each other's sexuality. Therefore, it is evident that many readers are unable to grasp Lawrence's world, apparently because of his literary sensibility of rich religious symbolism. Furthermore, Lawrence's ideas and symbols can be seen in the critical tradition of psychoanalysis and in post-modern fashion. This paper argues that symbols in Lawrence's fiction, particularly in his Woman in Love have a religious and mystical connotation. This aspect of Lawrence's symbolism can be appreciated profitably with some parallel analysis of Rumi's mystical poetry. The paper has taken most prominent themes of love, ecstasy and union and their symbolic delineation in Woman in Love, analyzing them with Rumi's handling of the aforementioned themes. Lawrence's religious vision is clear in his use of biblical symbols in his fiction, however, his world is not based on Biblical world alone, for he calls Bible the Jewish moral book and a stick to beat an immoral dog, however, he was very much fascinated by the symbols and fantasies in the Apocalypse. He says that symbols in the Apocalypse lead us to the Chaldean and to Persian. There is a deep connection between Lawrence's appreciation of ancient eastern myths and his use of symbolism, as this paper has argued, reveals a connection between Lawrence's symbolism and the ancient Persian religions and medieval Sufism of Rumi and others, which has influenced Lawrence's imaginations.

Keywords: love, mystical, symbolism

1. Introduction

It would not be wrong to say that *Women in Love* is a novel of ideas where Lawrence explicitly expresses his views about human life in general and the spiritual consciousness of men. In his speeches, Birkin, the main character in the novel, expresses his notions and opinion about different topics from life, death, and love. The story of the novel explores the reality and truthfulness of Birkin's philosophy of life. Although Lawrence never says anything about the sources of his philosophy about life, death, truth, and love, he explains these ideas in an unmistakably clear voice through Birkin. If we search for these ideas, we will find that nowhere are these ideas as clearly expressed as in the Sufi doctrine of the medieval Persian masters.



According to Jessie Chambers, Lawrence's early sweetheart and a very sympathetic companion in his early life, Lawrence rarely acknowledges sources of his ideas. She informs us in her memoirs and letters that she used to judge his latest readings through his conversations in which he often emphasized the ideas he had happened to come across. She gives examples of the English Romantics and Nietzschean ideas. Likewise, in *Women in Love*, Lawrence constantly refers to the 'Will to Power' and refutes and rebukes it through Birkin and through its failure in Gerald's character, but never explicitly mentions Nietzsche or any other German philosophers whose ideas he refers to in the novel. Similarly, there are many instances of medieval and ancient religious imagery and symbols in *Women in Love*. Nonetheless, as Moynahan observes, "Through Symbolism Lawrence was able to project his prophetic, anti-traditional values within the matrix of narrative form" (Moynahan, 1956, p. 56). As an artist, he applied an especial metaphoric language either to extend or to emphasize what has been already expressed in arguments or in some cases will be expressed later.

Likewise, one such description says much about the spiritual and mystical nature of the text in *Women in Love*. When Birkin is struggling to convey his concept of 'love' with Ursula, she begins detesting Birkin's prophetic posture. She despises this image of Birkin's, which she calls 'Salvator Mundi' (the saviour), a reference to Christ who preaches a mysterious concept of love. Exasperated with his own arguments Birkin drops some daisies on the water, which starts moving on the water like a 'Dervish dance', "It turned slowly round in a slow, slow Dervish dance, as it veered away" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 157). This fascinates Ursula, and she experiences a strange feeling of awe and amusement which frightens her. She wonders, "Why did they move so strongly and mystically" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 158). It is worth noting that Dervish dance is called sama or whirling dance which is the spiritual dance of Sufis started by Rumi. Rumi says about sama, "When a mystic begins a dance, / he reaches out to heaven to hear: / God reveals the mystery, / for those able to bear. / Merriment must be selfless; / hearts burn like incense!" (Rumi, 1979, p. 265). According to Sufi sources, every moment and every movement in sama has a symbolic meaning that is a form of prayer for them. This mystical dance of Sufis has been popularized in the West by the name of Dervish dance since the 19th century. Dervish is another word for Sufi in Farsi. It shows that Lawrence was not only aware of Rumi's Dervish dance but the way he applies the image of this Sufi concept shows that he was also aware of its connotation and spiritual significance.

2. Literature Review

Lawrence's symbolic use of language and images is the main concern of this study. Critics like Charles Michael Burrack and Virginia Hyde try to explain Lawrence symbolic images in Judea-Christian traditions. For Hyde Lawrence evokes Biblical images and images from 'old civilizations' to communicate 'beyond words' (Hyde, 1992, p. 35). She sees Lawrence's symbols as references to a 'universal archetypes' which go back to ancient Egyptian, Chaldean, and other sources. She suggests that the cosmological symbols we find in New and Old Testaments have themselves come from ancient traditions of pre-Christian civilizations. While Burrack argues that Lawrence may have experienced 'magical and mystical' visions (Burrack, 2005, p. 98). He traces Lawrence's, as he calls, 'language of sacred experiences' to another ancient civilization the Hindu Tantric. He says, "Yogic theory is at the heart of Lawrence's subjective science" (Burrack, 2005, p. 139). It is interesting to note that 'intuitive knowledge' or as Burrack calls it 'subjective science'



has found its fullest expression and manifestation in Sufi mystic tradition which both these critics do not mention.

Much earlier in these studies Moynahan describes Lawrence's 'narrative symbolism' as an instrument to his 'peculiar vision' of the world (1956, p. 76). He argues that Lawrence as a typical 'prophetic' writer goes back to traditional wisdom to create a 'new order of values'. She considers Lawrence's going back to traditional wisdom, as a revolt against the modern scientific world view. According to Moynahan, Lawrence's purpose in his symbolic language which she calls 'symbolic rituals' was to show the difference between the world vision he had and the modern scientific world view of the reader and in this way, he wants to project a holistic view of the world. She insists on a secular interpretation of Lawrence's symbolism. However, another important critic who had a personal relation with Lawrence, Murry records his knowledge of Lawrence's life and work in which he maintains that Lawrence's art was a kind of his homage to 'Almighty God' (1954, p. 211).

Nevertheless, Murry says that Lawrence had a 'definite and personal conception of the nature of 'Almighty God'. For me, this is a very significant view and particularly, coming from somebody who knew Lawrence so closely. One can find a parallel concept of a subjective view of God in Sufi literature. He regards Lawrence's symbolism as a parable to present his understanding of human spiritual history. However, difficulty with Murry, as he later admits, is that he stresses too much on his own memories and impression of man as he saw him in his lifetime instead of Lawrence's art as presented in his novels. Nonetheless, Murry's treatment of some of the poems by Lawrence and Lawrence's novel *Women in Love* could be of interest to this study. Sagar, like Leavis, thinks that Lawrence was writing in the Imaginative tradition of Blake and Whitman. For Sagar (2008), Lawrence evokes mythical symbols to preserve the meanings of those myths as an artist.

However, the most significant criticism of Lawrence's work comes with the emergence of New Criticism during the 50s and 60s. Most important criticism comes from two very influential literary critics of English literature: T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis. Eliot's criticism which most of the critics in Leavisian traditions consider as actually unfounded and erroneous but to me Eliot was much more aware of Lawrence's intentions and beliefs than others. Because Eliot's point of view represents the traditional and orthodox thought or framework, which every conventional religion intends to enforce. Eliot's attack on Lawrence represents Eliot's religious morality and he regards Lawrence's views to be considered as heretical.

The fact, that, Eliot's traditionalist school of thought within the 'New Criticism' was not comfortable with Lawrence and particularly with Lawrence's views of individualistic thinking and intuitional freedom, suggests that Lawrence was crossing the boundaries of strictly law-abiding milieu of orthodox religion and morality. But the important thing is not that Lawrence was not writing within the conventional norms of religious sensibilities; because in this case we can see there were others who could be accused of heretic attitude towards orthodox morality. Even Eliot himself was the biggest critic of his age and some of the conventions and longed for medieval grandeur. And there were secular writers of repute without any religious obligations as well. Hence, for me what distinguishes Lawrence's art from the bulk of the modernist artistic creations of the first quarter of twentieth century, such as Joyce, Pound, and Woolf, is his spiritual insight. It seems to me, what annoyed the religious moralists like Eliot the most was not his non-religious or heretic attitude but his deeply religious sensibility on a different level, which was some sort of spiritual



awakening or mystical awareness. Eliot in his anti-Lawrence polemic makes it quite clear that it is Lawrence's religion, instead of non-religion, that disturbs him most. Spilka quotes Eliot as saying: "The point is that Lawrence started life wholly free from any restriction of tradition or institution, that he had no guidance except the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity" (1955, p. 44).

F. R. Leavis, whose powerful voice in support of Lawrence and his art renewed a new interest in his work and it is evident that Leavis's critical studies became instrumental in reading Lawrence with new perspectives by the later critic, in his critique on Eliot's attack on Lawrence, Leavis regards Eliot's attitude as 'Anglo-Catholic'. Leavis says, "Eliot's attitude to life is, not less than Flaubert's, one of distaste and disgust" (1967, p. 68). Leavis considers Lawrence's art in the tradition of Blake and Whitman and calls them 'two ancestors' of Lawrence. It is significant to note that both these alleged 'ancestors' of Lawrence were famous for their deeply spiritual and imaginative poetry. Whitman's transcendental love is what Sufis call 'Ishq Elahi' (intense love of God), which enables the 'Ishiq' or 'Lover' to transcend self or 'ego' into universal love or 'cosmological truth', which for them is God. Once the lover reaches on the level calls 'Miraj e Ishq' or 'transcendent Love', God or the Truth reveals itself and this is the level of ultimate consciousness of self which merges with God or Truth, and everything becomes 'Haq' (Truth). For Leavis what brings Lawrence's art closer to Whitman's poetry is Whitman's "ache of 'amorous love' and his enthusiasm for merging" (1967, p. 196). There is nothing closer to Sufis philosophy of 'Ishq' than this. Leavis regards Lawrence as a genius and the greatest novelist of his time.

Leavis considers the very rare positive early criticism of Lawrence's lifetime and of the period immediate after his death, the critics such as Forster and Huxley, to initiate his revival of Lawrence's studies. His is the most eloquent and strongest voice in support of Lawrence's art, although he does not give much thought to Lawrence's ideas of self-consciousness and spiritual fulfilment. However, he recognizes certain mystical traces in Lawrence's use of language, as he says about the poetic language Lawrence writes his fictions, "Words here are used in the way, not of eloquence but of creative poetry. the kind of intense apprehension of the unity of life. It goes with his ability to talk about-to evoke- 'blood-intimacy' and 'blood-togetherness'" (Leavis, 1967, p. 342).

It seems impossible for most of the critics to ignore the deep spiritual insight in Lawrence, but everyone has exerted his own meaning and explanation in this regard. Another important critic of Lawrence, Graham Hough thinks that Lawrence's asking for impartial love corresponds to his rejection of 'Christian-Love' (1963, p. 56). Hough, however, rightly observes that, Lawrence's prophet in his short story *The Man Who Died*, "dreads the love of which he had once been a preacher, the love that compels" (1963, p. 87). Accordingly, for Hough, Lawrence believes in an impartial love relation, a kind of 'the Whitmanesque universal brotherhood'. But Hough rejects it on the pretext that it is impossible and against Christian concept of love and relationship. Hough further criticizes Lawrence for his evocation of what he calls 'dark gods' and which for Hough produce fascist ideas and such dark forces are against democratic ideals. He thinks Lawrence's vulnerability and rootedness from his own society and community make him less likely to 'know the political reality'. Hough commends Lawrence for his sincere efforts; but at the same time accuses him of 'ignorance' and 'misguided' effort to understand the nature of Christian love and



resurrection of true faith. These are same accusations, the jurists, theologians, and orthodox moralist of every age found their Sufi poets and dervishes guilty of.

3. Symbols in Woman in Love and Some Parallel with Rumi

There are three kinds of symbols. First, there are symbols running throughout the novel like 'Love', which is the most powerful symbol in the book. 'Love', human 'physicality' and 'naked nature' or the natural world are such forces which mystify, transport, and transform the characters and their inner selves. Through their relationships and associations, the characters come to know each other and become aware of the reality of their intentions. Birkin's transformation comes through his association with and love for Ursula. It is through his love for Ursula that he becomes aware of the truth of his inner desires. After meeting her he tells Gerald he believes in the 'finality of love' and he also detests Hermione's pretensions and her 'sensuousness' that he calls 'pornographic' and lustful.

He wants a different 'sensuality', which he has never been able to express. He avoids Hermione but once he finds her side by side with Ursula in the classroom scene the presence of Ursula transports him and mystifies him to such an extent that he can now see the difference between Hermione's idea of bodily pleasure and 'sensuousness' and his own need for sensual fulfilment. Hers is mechanical, destructive, and untrue while his is mystical, fulfilling and comes through 'dark blood knowledge'. He says of his idea of physicality and sensual love, that it is a "dark involuntary being. It is death to one self-, but it is the coming into being of another" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 132). Rumi puts it another way, the idea of false self and true self, "The words, 'I am the Truth' were light in Mansur's (Hallaj) mouth, / In the mouth of Pharaoh 'I am Lord Supreme' was blasphemy. / The staff in the hand of Moses was a witness, / In the hands of the magicians it was naught" (Rumi, 1979, p. 365). The difference between Hermione's physicality and natural being and Birkin's sensual fulfilment and physicality is the same as Hallaj's and Pharaoh's claims of 'Godship'.

Then there are direct references to Biblical, Greek, and ancient mythical sources. Such symbolic references only explain and extend the plot of the story in general. For instance, Gerald's physical strength, pleasure, self-confident beauty, and his attitude of extracting happiness from possession remind Ursula of the Greek god of wine Dionysus. Lawrence clearly does not approve of Dionysus' way of ecstatic pleasure as Birkin says he does not like 'Dionysus ecstasy'. While talking to Gerald about the 'love of a woman' and 'finality of love' Gerald's views bring Birkin into a state of mind which reminds him of the Biblical story of 'Sodom' and wishes another destruction of humans like the 'Sodom' story, which he thinks will save the natural world from the destruction of human will. Again, when Birkin meets Ursula after his illness and they talk about the prospects of a happy life, Ursula's immature views of 'jolly lives' make him detest 'humanity'. He concludes that all these 'healthy bodies of men and women' are like 'Apple of Sodom' and 'dead sea fruit' rosy from outside and 'dry-rotten' and 'corrupt ash' inside.

In another instance, when Gerald comes to Gudrun in the night after the devastating effects of his father's death, where to Gudrun he looks like son of Zeus the Greek god because as the narrator tells us he has come to prove himself, he has come to prove his will and for 'vindication'. Gudrun let him conquer her and satisfy his ego, which is the destructive part of their story. Their story reminds Birkin of 'sea-born Aphrodite' or Venus the Greek goddess of love, which he calls



'the dark river of dissolution' (Lawrence, 2008, p. 234). On the other hand, Birkin is also referred to as the son of God but with a different perspective.

When Ursula and Birkin set out to make love for the first time not in their bed at home but in the natural world of trees and darkness, a very significant reference to a Biblical hymn sets the scene: "Glory to thee my God this night / For all the blessings of the light" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 276). It seems Lawrence refers to Birkin as a god of love. Before their coming together, Ursula goes through a mystical transportation into 'a strange' world of 'transcendent reality'. This reminds Ursula of the old 'magical' world of Genesis, and she thinks of Birkin as son of God who has chosen a fair daughter of earth to make love with her. Nevertheless, she does not see him as Christ as the Biblical or rather New Testaments son of God who wants to save the humanity from original sin (which Ursula calls the Old Adam in men and a trick of men against women's integrity and dignity). There are many more such images and references to Judeo-Christian traditions and ancient myths. However, the limited space of this dissertation does not allow us to go after each symbol and allusion here.

3.1. Symbolic Events

There are certain events and narrative descriptions in the novel, which have their symbolic importance too. Description of snow and trees and flowery summer has a symbolic significance. The novel is full of mystical and fascinating images of the natural world, which have the quality of transporting the reader into a transcendental world beyond material existence. The use of language is also symbolic in the sense that it is very close to poetry in certain places. The poetic mode of language seems deliberate, and the intention is likely to create a spiritual and metaphysical element in the narration. It is worth noting that, the poetic mode of expression and allegorical language is a permanent feature in Sufism.

Almost all the great Sufi masters have expressed their message to the world in poetic, highly imaginative, and allegorical way. In this way, they have successfully popularized their message, even today people read their poetry as fondly as ever. For instant, Rumi is considered as one of the greatest lyrical poets of all times and he is one of five top selling poets in the United State during 2009 and he is the most popular poet in New York. The poetry of the Sufis is full of images like 'wine' and 'wine server female figure' called 'saqi'. The sensuous images of wine (mehy), pub (meh khana) and the beloved or wine server (saqi) float on the surface of the Sufi couplets refreshing the reader's senses and as a result awakening one to feelings his own self. Wine in Sufism indicates to the intoxicating effect of love, Rumi says, "'Tis the ferment of love that possesses the wine.'" (Whinfield, 1898, p. 2) Other symbols like flame or light (hararat) signify life force and inner self i. e. the truth of life in the Sufi literature. Hafez brings together the images of 'light' and 'wine' quite with extraordinary poetic success, "The sages gain their deepest love by wine's resplendent light, / The inward gem of everyone this ruby brings to light." (Stepaniants, 1989, p. 38)

3.2. Symbolism in Characterization

The characters in the novel have their symbolic implications. The characters of Gerald and Hermione symbolize egoistic individualism and the possessive nature of 'will power'. These also indicate the false image of 'sensuousness' and body pleasure. However, the characters of Gudrun and Pussum symbolize a corrupted concept of love. Ursula and Birkin on the other hand, struggle with their passions of feelings successfully and represent the 'true union' of love and the spiritual association in a true human relationship. There are clear implications that Lawrence brings forth



the character of Gerald Crich to show the failure of imagination. Gerald awakens with a different consciousness than Birkin, he becomes aware of his power to rule and subjugate. When he takes over the mining business of his father, we are told what he thinks of this responsibility, "Now, suddenly, with a sort of exultation, he laid hold of the world." (2008, p. 229) He for the first time becomes aware of his name (C. B. & Co.) on the wagons, which gives him a "vision of power".

He starts thinking like a powerhouse rather in mechanical terms who controls everything and can mold things by the sheer power of his will. The narrator records his thought process in these words, "The will of man was the determining factor. Man was the arch-God of earth." (2008, p. 231) He is successful in bits, but he fails, even the impression his personality leaves on others shows the contradiction and failure of his character. Gudrun, who admires him cannot help noticing his 'sinister' attitude.

Early in the novel during the wedding scene Gudrun thinks of Gerald as, "His gleaming beauty, maleness, like a young, good-humored, smiling wolf, did not blind her to the significant, sinister stillness in his bearing, the lurking danger of his unsubdued temper." (2008, p. 13) And more significantly she thinks of him as a representative of a certain world with the ambitions of a beast not human when she says of him as "his totem is the wolf". However, the ultimate failure of his designs symbolizes the fate of modern man, the narrator informs of his destructive design as final pronouncement in the 'Industrial Magnate' chapter, it is concluded that, "What he wanted was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions." (2008: p. 231) It is a kind of a prediction in early in the novel, which turns out to be true at the end. Birkin, on the other hand, is after the fulfilment of his own 'self' rather than his 'will' as is the case with Gerald.

Birkin symbolizes the positive forces of 'self' and the richness of human soul. He strives to gain spiritual strength through human relationships. His awakening to his spiritual strength is different from Gerald's awareness of the power of his will. In 'Excuse' chapter, Birkin's spirits become conscious of a new reality after resolving his all differences with Ursula, "as if he had just come awake, like a thing that is born, like a bird when it comes out of an egg, into a new universe." (2008, p. 323) Hermione and Gerald, on the other hand, lack such robust self as the narrator informs us of Hermione's ultimate weakness, "She did not know herself what it was. It was a lack of robust self... a deficiency of being within her." (2008, p. 15) This deficiency within self-defines the fates of all the other characters in the novel except for Birkin and Ursula who strive hard to accomplish a sort of richness of spirits in their soul.

3.3. Extended Symbolism of Ecstasy and Its Different Manifestations

Gordon (1969) describes the form of *Women in Love* as a tension between 'poetic interest in states' and 'novelistic interest in characters.' Gordon might not have called it a tension in form if he had seen Lawrence's pronouncement that he is not going to create the 'egoistic' and 'static' characters of a realist novel in *Women in Love*. However, Gordon is right in his observation that "Like Blake, Lawrence was interested not in 'individuals' but in 'states'" (1969, p. 51). The ecstatic state of mind is one such concept Lawrence deals with in *Women in love*. Lawrence differentiates the sacred power of transcendent euphoria from mental frenzy and excitement. Rumi says, "Worldly senses are the ladder of earth, / Spiritual senses are the ladder of heaven." (Whinfield, 1898, p. 8) Lawrence wants the 'spiritual senses' to prevail on one's consciousness. However, before we investigate his description of spiritual senses, let us see how he brings forward different 'states' of ecstasy. For instance, Hermione's act of violence against Birkin at her home in Breadalby takes place in an ecstatic condition of anger. Her egoistic self goes mad when Birkin



argues and defeats her hypocritical statement that 'all men are equal in spirit'. Lawrence describes her condition, "It was dynamic hatred and loathing, coming strong and black out of the unconscious. She heard his words in her unconscious self, consciously she was as if deafened, she paid no heed to them." And, then she thrills to her strength and is quite delighted, "What delight in strength, what delirium of pleasure! She was going to have her consummation of voluptuous ecstasy at last!" (2008, p. 107-8) She acts violently to fulfil her ecstatic condition. Birkin reacts to this frantic act of violation with confusion and agitation, but he instinctively goes into nature. He finds nature responsive, and he walks naked into the vegetation, which makes him free and happy. He feels a sort of communion with nature, which is an initial form of awakening of spirits.

After his initial awakening to the fact of his spiritual desires, in the presence of Ursula, during nature and in his hostile relationship with Hermione early in the story, Birkin, in the middle of story, gets further into his divine initiation. Birkin and Ursula are separated from each other when Birkin goes to the south of France for some time. Both go through a spiritual transformation isolated from each other and the climax of this transformation culminates into a total loss of egoistic self while both observe the 'split moon' in the pond in an isolated manner from each other (the further significance of the moon scene will be discussed later in the dissertation). They meet after this mystical revolution of the inner self, though they resume their previous argument about their relationship but with different understandings and consequences.

Furthermore, Lawrence knows before they can achieve their goal of ecstatic love and happiness another western misconception of ecstatic spontaneity must be refuted, and the spirits of Birkin and Ursula washed clean from all the rust of western thoughts of love, relations, and happiness. Birkin wants their spirits to be free so that their souls can reflect the ultimate truth of delight and rapture. When Birkin tries to convey this to Ursula, she understands it in her own western perspective of Greek mythical terms of 'serving female' and she rebukes Birkin for his godly manner of wanting her to 'serve' his delighted spirits. It is the ancient Greek concept of Dionysic pleasure and the conventional religious paradise of 'serving virgins' in her mind which so exasperates her often. Birkin, understanding her apprehensions regarding such a conception of love and submission, reassures her, "I don't mean let yourself go in the Dionysic ecstatic way," he goes as far as rejection of all kinds of conventional happiness, he says, "But I hate ecstasy, Dionysic or any other. It's like going round in a squirrel cage" (2008, p. 260). He insists on an independent and liberated happiness, he wants the delight of liberated souls. He tells her, "I want you not to care about yourself, just to be there and not to care about yourself, not insist-be glad and sure and indifferent" (2008, p. 260). If we compare this kind of ecstatic condition with Sufi tradition, we will find it very close to what Sufi poet Rumi said during the thirteenth century that, "For what is this Divine voice but the inward voice? / The spirit's eye and ear possess this sense, / The eye and ear of reason and sense lack it. / The word 'compulsion' makes me impatient for love's sake; / 'Tis he who loves not who is fettered by compulsion. / This is close communion with God, not compulsion, / The shining of the sun, and not a dark cloud" (Whinfield, 1898, p. 26). Hafez, another great Sufi master of the age, calls for his sweetheart to come with him in these words, "Take wine, be joyful and come!" (Clarke, 1998, p. 754)

To continue with Ursula and Birkin's story of spiritual communion in love, when Birkin is left alone after Ursula has gone, he feels 'wistful' and 'yearning'. He becomes more and more aware of his soul's desires for her, "he knew he did not want a further sensual experience-something deeper, darker, than ordinary life could give." (2008, p. 262) Now he is on another level



of existence, he has been transported to a spiritual 'state' where he becomes aware of his own desires of higher love and union with beloved and he also differentiates between the available conventional 'knowledge in dissolution' in his society and his own lofty idea of love. This reminds him of the majestic African female figure in a painting in Halliday's place. Earlier in the novel Gerald has been fascinated with the physical pain of 'laboring female' figure and asks Birkin why it is so elegant in pain. Birkin simply tells him 'It is art'. Now he is becoming aware of its full significance, he associates himself with the 'creative posture' of this female figure to which 'art' has granted permanency. He thinks the figure in the painting must belong to an ancient 'holy' civilization, which must have a desire for 'creation' which reveals that he is becoming aware in his soul. But that civilization was lost long ago because, "since the relation between the senses and the outspoken mind had broken, leaving the experience all in one sort, mystically sensual." This broken relationship between body and mind resulted in 'knowledge in dissolution and corruption', which makes us worship false gods and fake desires. He ponders on western civilization and is frightened by his own strange revelation that this civilization is an extension of those 'broken relationships' which ended to the 'holy' African civilization 'thousands of years ago'. He concludes that the only way of 'freedom' from this destruction is to make a 'gentle communion'. He thinks that "There was the paradisaic entry into pure, single being, the individual soul taking precedence over love and desire for union, stronger than any pangs of emotion, a lovely state of free-proud singleness". (2008: p. 265) This sudden revelation of his subjective truth forces him to propose Ursula at once.

Intoxication in Lawrence as in Sufism is the state of mind before perfect 'union'. Intoxication has its symbolic significance in Sufi doctrine; it is one mode of being which helps the enchanted lover (Sufi) on his way to the union with Beloved. Sufis used to perform sama - a kind of dance to achieve a particular state of mind which prepares them for their final journey to find out the 'Ultimate Truth'. Rumi describes this state of mind in these words, "Frenzied lovers worship wine/ and dance to the music/ of a water wheel. / They turn like a wheel/ and shed tears like water. / Don't fault a drunken dervish; / he thrusts his hands and feet, / because he is drowning." (Moyné, 2009, p. 56) In the chapter 'Excuse' Ursula and Birkin go on a drive in Birkin's car, though Ursula consents to accompany him but she is 'closed and responding'.

However, soon after they come closer after a bitter argument about Birkin relationship with Hermione. Birkin is aware of Ursula's lack of response to his spiritual needs, because he thinks "Ursula was still at the emotional personal level." He wants Ursula to go 'beyond herself as to accept him at the quick of death' (2008, p. 316). In the evening and after a lot of emotional outbursts Ursula realizes the power of spiritual love in Birkin. She becomes aware of the different nature of this experience with Birkin, "this was neither love nor passion. It was the daughters of men coming back to the sons of God." (2008, p. 325) Ursula becomes intoxicated and unconscious of any reason after she finds her, in Lawrence's words, 'perfect equilibrium like stars' with Birkin; she is no longer able to think in material terms of the world. She does not want to answer Birkin as the reader is informed that, "She did not want to be disturbed into taking thought." She is just remotely aware of the world around herself, "Even as he went into the light, public place, he remained dark and magic" to her. (2008, pp. 330-1) She is no longer conscious of material existence as such, but she is mystically aware of Birkin's presence. This presence is not ordinary material existence rather an artistic and more real presence like 'the great carven statues of real Egypt'. She feels herself 'liberated' into 'perfection' and the narrator inform us that it is her



'sustaining anticipation' which has such an intoxicating effect on her. This is a higher level of awareness than the material sense of things.

Symbolism of Union: Annihilation of Self and Ultimate Union Kalnins argues in her analysis of Lawrence's apocalyptic concepts that for Lawrence, "Revelation was a symbolic account of how to attain inner harmony as well as a sense of living connection with the greater universe" (1995, p. 12). Search for a greater 'Truth' beyond the material world has always been a passion for all the philosophers of 'being' (existential questions). Lawrence hints to his mode of enquiry for attaining the 'ultimate' knowledge of the cosmos in his *Fantasia of Unconscious* that from early Greek philosophers to Plato and from St. John to Frazer he has just taken clues and through these clues, he mainly goes forward by his 'intuition' only. It is like Sufis 'initiation'; they take their initial step with the help from existing religious knowledge and then go through different stages of the exploration of their 'inner self' in an intoxicated state of unconsciousness and awake into a reality of themselves which has been hidden from them all their lives. This privileged state of revelation is called the 'Ultimate Union' where 'I' loses its meaning and there will be no more personal pronouns like 'I' and 'you'.

Likewise, Birkin in *Women in Love* wants to meet Ursula at this level of being where their present selves become strangers to them and he wants a bond in such a state of existence, which for him means a lasting relation. In one place Birkin says, "I only want us to know what we are." Rumi asks this question hundreds of years ago when the Islamic theologians have already solved the question of 'creation' and 'existence' for themselves; but they obviously could not induce Rumi into their world of pseudo rationalism. Rumi says, "Neither this body am I, nor Soul, / Nor these fleeting images passing by, / Nor concepts and thoughts, mental images / Nor yet sentiments and the psych's / Labyrinth. / Who then am I? A consciousness / Without origin, / Not born in time, nor begotten here below, / I am that which was, is and ever / Shall be, / A jewel in the crown of the / Divine Self, / A star in the firmament of the / Luminous One" (Nasr, 2007, p. 11). Sufis believe in a dual existence, and they believe that after the death of this phenomenon self the real 'Self' will be exposed to a reality, which cannot be described, like Birkin's 'dark' and 'invisible' knowledge or state of knowing in *Women in Love*. Stepaniants, in his research on the philosophical aspects of Sufism, notes, "The death of the phenomenal self opens the way to the essential Knowledge in which there is no distinction of subject and object and the Truth of the Unity of Being is attained" (1989, p. 46). This truth based 'happiness' and love are an obsession for Birkin which exasperates Ursula at first, because she thinks that she does not want for its 'truthfulness' and to know the reality of anything but she wants love for its own sake. However, Birkin seems to have other plans and other things to accomplish from his 'love' relationship with Ursula and they struggle on throughout the novel.

Moreover, the reader finds in many places the concept, rather literary, the word 'annihilation' in *Women in Love*. For instance, in the Moony chapter Ursula feels empty and 'nothingness' inside becomes restless and goes to forest to find some solace and comfort in the company of animals and trees in the forest because she thinks she cannot make herself happy in the company of human beings for "She had a profound grudge against the human being" (2008, p. 252).

In the forest, she finds Birkin talking with himself and throwing stones in the pond to obliterate the reflection of the moon in the pond. The Moon has a dual existence, one is in the sky, which is beyond obliteration, and another is the reflection in the pond, which is vulnerable to



Birkin's stones. Birkin's stone obliterates it for a while, disperses its light and breaks its unity and existence, but soon afterward the 'heart' and 'light' in it, which has its source in the real moon of sky, come together, "He saw the moon regathering itself insidiously, saw the heart of the rose intertwining vigorously and blindly, calling back the scattered fragments, winning home the fragments in a pulse and in effort of return." (2008, p. 256-7) Ursula who a little while earlier was cursing the moon for its brightness, which was disturbing her, now becomes anxious and interrupts Birkin from stoning the moon. This makes her hopeful and gives her the strength to resume her previous arguments about love with Birkin. Birkin on the other hand is fascinated by the power of light in the moon, becomes conscious of what he wants from Ursula, "There is a golden light in you, which I wish you could give me." (2008, p. 259) Birkin wants Ursula's 'golden light' which has the power to unify with reality, which has unified the 'reflected moon' in the pond with 'The Moon' in the sky. In Rumi's word, "Into my heart's night, along a narrow way / I groped and lo! The light, an infinite land of day." (Stepaniants 1989, p. 44)

In another instance, Lawrence describes a love scene between Gudrun and Gerald in these words, "she passed away, everything in her was melted down and fluid...sleeping in him as lightning sleeps in a pure, soft stone. So, she was passed away and gone in him, and he was perfected." (2008, p. 345) It seems she is no more and there is only 'he' is remaining. She annihilates into her object of love and remains unified with him. In Rumi's allegorical language one sees an explicit example, "One went to the door of the Beloved and / Knocked. A voice asked, 'who is there' / He answered, 'It is I'. / The voice said, 'There is no room for Me and Thee'; / After a year of solitude and deprivation he returned and knocked. / A voice from within asked, 'Who is there' / The man said, 'It is Thee' / The door was opened for him" (Whinfield, 1898, pp. 47-48). The reader is constantly reminded of a mysterious mode of thought in the novel and one is aware of the diminishing personalities of the characters and the inner transformations taking place during event. Birkin and Ursula both want their relationship to develop but at the same time they resist each other until their 'inner selves' transform to a certain level where like Rumi's 'voice in the room' they are allowed to enter a union of their soul.

4. Conclusion

Lawrence's use of symbolism clearly points towards his mystical vision. As we witnessed in the analysis of his novel *Women in Love*, he contradicts the psychic interpretation of love relationship. Instead, in his symbolic use of language, he demonstrates a religious sensibility in his delineation of the theme of love and in his characterization. He takes very simple and plain events of love making and the characters' interaction with nature and build a symbolic world of spiritual and mystical meaning. As we have witnessed in his portrayal of love relationship between two different couples, each couple seeks greater symbolic meaning in their pursuit of love. Birkin and Ursula seek a metaphysical union between them; they struggle to connect their bodily relationship with their non-material and spiritual existence. Similarly, Gudrun and Gerald want to overcome their material and physical reality, however, in a much destructive way than the other couple.

Rumi's voice and his great symbolic poetry helped us to understand the spiritual connotation of Lawrence's indication to an inner meaning of his metaphorical language in his *Women in Love*. As we observed in above analysis of *Women in Love* that the question why Birkin needs an accomplished woman like Ursula to attain his mysterious knowledge and truth of his own self is very interesting. However, as we observed it is always the case with mystical lovers



of truth throughout the history. This obsession of Birkin with Ursula and even Gerald brings him closer to Sufi poets' search for 'The Truth'. Most Sufi poets have composed their 'dewans' or the poetic discourses apparently in 'love' and devotion for either some male or female friend or in some cases in remembrance of some unknown woman. In the extreme case of Hafez, it is sometimes handsome boys whose features moved him to write his everlastingly beautiful ghazals (couplets) which are full of images like 'wine' and 'sensual' beauty. He very famously once wrote about a certain handsome boy who worked in a chemist shop in the bazaar of Sheraz in present day Iran that, it is a paradox that it is the chemist boy who has brought this sickness in heart and him (Hafez) is still forced to go to him for medicine. Rumi wrote a whole book of his love poems in the remembrance of his Darvesh friend Shams Tabrizi whom he said his soul mate. Stepeniants observes in this regard, "Sufis expressed their desire and adoration for the Transcendental, that is for God, in the easily comprehensible form of man's carnal love for woman" (1989. p. 286). Hundreds of legendary Sufi poets and saints in the Sub-continent are still celebrated for their teachings of peace and love; their poetry mostly consists of love poems either directly addressed or in remembrance of their sweethearts.

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