

# A critical study of Incest in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.

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## Abstract

Human beings formulated codes of living for the better functioning of their lives. These codes of living are one of the primary factors which distinguish his life from animal lives. But despite the acquired and stylized behaviour he has proved many times that he has a tendency towards the savage, a tendency to transgress the forbidden lives. The psyche differs from man to man. But there is certainly an animal in every man's mind that lies deep buried and when it finds chances it will come out exhibiting its cruelty, destroy the lives around it.

When we search for the etymological meaning of the word incest, the Google encyclopedia points out that incest is the sexual relation between persons to whom marriage is prohibited by custom or law because of the close kinship. With the course of time, the materialistic attitude of men blinded them and the act of Incest became too strong in modern societies. Fathers treated their daughters cruelly and compelled them to indulge in sexual activities. Freud analyzed these kinds of relationships and proved that all these were the suppressed emotions in a human mind, and sometimes he becomes savage, not bothering about its after effects.

In the novel *Sons and Lovers* [1913], D.H. Lawrence depicts a kind of incestuous relationship between mother and son which can surely be categorized in Overt Incest, i.e., sexual contact in a dependent relationship, the most obvious between parent and child.

Key words: Incest, transgress, overt.

## Introduction

Literature is the mirror of the society. So naturally one can see the reflection of incidents taking place in the society in it. From time immemorial, the theme of Incest has gained place in literature. The fable of Oedipus is a fine example of it in ancient literature. Literary work in English literature has covered almost every type of incestuous relationships. D.H. Lawrence, one of the major novelists of 20<sup>th</sup> century carries the theme of Incest in his novels. It was a well recognized fact that he himself was the victim of a deep rooted mother fixation which has been reflected in his novels too. This paper is an attempt to study and analyze spiritual Incest in the novel *Sons and Lovers*.

The bond between a son and his mother is unbreakable. The importance of a mother in a son's life isn't even describable. A son is so interwoven with his mother that you can barely tell that they are different people. Just as a daughter is a daddy's girl, so a son is to his mother. She will be the one who will take care of him and make sure that no one hurts him.

Many women prefer to have a male child. They say that having a son gives them a sense of completeness. One woman affirmed, "it is as if through him I have found the missing part of me." Thus a mother becomes complete giving birth to a male child. Throughout the history of mankind, mother-son relationships have been considered specific. When a mother has protective love for her son she becomes fiercely protective of his life, crippling his emotional grounds and tying him to her apron strings as "Momma's Boy". This tendency has been documented even from Biblical times in the story of Rebekah, who encouraged her favourite son Jacob to steal his mother's blessing through impersonation.

In the case of Paul Morel, he and his mother had a feeling of attachment from the time she was carrying him. Paul Morel being a sensitive and sickly child, develops a neurotic strain in his personality in the very early years of life. In fact, his neurosis is of pre-natal origin. The entire period of pregnancy is marked with unending quarrels with her husband. Once, she is even shut out of the house and walks in the garden trembling in every limb with the child boiling within her. This must have created an unpleasant impression on the child.

From this, we must assume that the child in her womb might have understood the pain of his mother. And when the child was born, she felt as if the navel string that had connected its frail body with hers had not been broken. This is a peculiar kind of mother's feeling.

Another significant thing is Paul's hostility towards his father. Paul Morel, in his early childhood is exposed to the violent quarrels between his parents. He hears the crying of his mother, lying alone in the room he silently suffers the misery of his mother. He can't tolerate the suffering of his mother and often prays:

"Lord, let my father die." [S.L; P:59]

In one occasion when his father was hospitalized, we can see Paul taking the identity of his father and joyfully plays the role of husband.

"I am the man in the home now". [S.L; P:86]

Paul always loved to sleep with his mother and yearned for her physical warmth. This is a psychology of incestuous tendency in him. The scene in which Paul and Mrs. Morel go to Lincolnshire has clear sexual overtones. When Mrs. Morel complains of his extravagance, Paul immediately retorts:

"You forget I am a fellow taking his girl for an outing". [S.L; P: 143]

Besides these facts, we can see Paul engage in love relations with other women like Clara and Miriam. But he can't fully stay live in these relations as he was much enclosed in the cocoon of his mother's protectiveness. He ultimately finds fulfilment in the emotional and physical warmth of motherhood.

We are left with no doubt that Mrs. Morel is the power behind Paul. Two examples can be taken to probe a little deeper into Paul's psychic functioning. Paul often strokes his mother's face with affection, buries his mouth deep into her throat and kisses her fervently. But at the same time, in case of Miriam, when she tries to come near, he is instinctively repelled.

Woman's sexual desires are strongest and the most keenly wishes to have them satisfied. Gertrude Morel even didn't get a chance to have her sexual desires fulfilled, a mental, physical satisfaction from her husband. For its fulfilment, she approaches her male child Paul Morel.

## Conclusion

Paul and his mother received no love from inside or outside their family. So they built their own world and lived happily. Paul trapped by the conflict between his ego and super ego and inertly and subconsciously, he begins to feel a soft corner for his mother. It eventually turns to an incestuous love which is natural for a son like Paul. The circumstances were favourable for him. So either Paul or Mrs. Morel can't be blamed for their incestuous love. Paul finds no solace either from his family or his girl friends after his mother's death. He prefers lonely wandering and is not accusing anyone. He doesn't feel contempt for his incestuous love. Both Paul and his mother are positive thinkers till the end.

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