



## A study about characters and their psychological struggle about Spirituality in Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence

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**Abstract :** Sons and Lovers is one of the most powerful psychological novels of the Twentieth century-intensely autobiographical. When it first appeared in 1913, it was immediately recognized that Lawrence knowingly or unknowingly, was influenced by the term ‘Oedipus Complex’ coined by the

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



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Austrian Psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Lawrence depicts his own psychic traumas through the character of the protagonist, Paul Morel who suffers due to his mother’s domination over his soul and his inability to find a way out of his struggle between the all-consuming spiritual nature of possessive love and sexual attraction that makes Sons and Lovers one of Lawrence’s memorable work of written art. It speaks of a strange triangular love tension between Paul-Miriam-Clara relationships that turns out to be hopeless and futile.

**Introduction :** Analysis of Characters in Sons and Lovers Paul's character is molded right from the time his mother was pregnant with him. So, in the very first chapter of the novel, Walter has an argument with his wife and pushes her out into the garden. Gertrude, pregnant with Paul, walks in the garden and feels the presence of the life force in nature because she is intensely conscious of the stars, the moonlight, the flowers and above all, the heady perfume of the flowers. She is also very conscious of the child with in her body and we realize that this child is going to be a very special one for her. When Paul is a child, he gets an attack of bronchitis, and has to stay at home to recover. At that time, she has set her hopes on William, but is also very attached to Paul, while he lies on the couch observing and admiring her. Paul is a very shy child, and hates doing jobs like collecting money for his father or scanning advertisements in the papers for a position suitable. He enjoys the company of his mother the most, as when they spend a day out in the city or in the countryside. He loves spending money to buy little gifts for her and brings home the prizes he wins to her as well as the money he earns at his job.



After William's death, it is Paul's illness which saves her from calamity. Paul's association with Miriam is, at first, a charming boy-girl friendship which is spoiled by the mother's possessiveness. Paul realizes what is happening, but is helpless before his mother's black mailing techniques as well as his own inability to break free from her. Both Miriam and his mother feel that an affair with Clara will do him good from their own point of view, but after it is over, Paul knows that he cannot have a normal relationship with any woman as long as his mother is alive. Though Paul resents his father (a classic example of the Oedipus complex), he admires his strength and virility, and this attitude is reflected in his love-hate relationship with Baxter. Paul's unnatural relationship with his mother is clearly seen when he advises her to detach herself from his father. When the mother dies after the overdose of morphia given by Paul, one would expect him to walk towards self-destruction, as he does at first. With his anchor, his mother gone, he is a broken spirit, restless and directionless. But Lawrence shows that a tenuous link holds him to sanity and he makes a superhuman effort to move away from death and towards life.

Mrs. Morel comes from a middle class background, and hence has rigid morals and values which she realizes Walter does not have, but wants her children to follow. She loves discussions, loves to listen to intellectual talk, neither of which she can get after her marriage to Walter. Her life is drab, lacking promise of personal and social fulfillment. Above all, she feels betrayed and disillusioned by her husband, who has fallen down on his early matrimonial promises because he has neither the social respectability nor the monetary security she wanted. In her disappointment, she turns first to William, and after his death, to Paul, for fulfillment. She places all her feelings and hopes in her sons, casting off her husband altogether. Her outlook and character are set at the very beginning of the novel, and nothing can stop her but death.

Miriam, is the first woman with whom Paul tries to establish a relationship, with whom he has a lot in common. He derives stimulus, inspiration from her, but dislikes her overemotional intensity and sacrificial spirituality.. She is timid and apprehensive (eg. of feedings, of riding the swing), which hints at her sexual incapacity. On the other hand, with Clara, Paul finds fulfillment of physical passion, of the life force of the universe. Though he finds joy and an elemental vitality, his relationship with Clara is sketchy outside their physical passion. Perhaps this is why both Mrs. Morel as well as Miriam feel that Clara is harmless. In fact, Mrs. Morel is afraid of Miriam because Paul enjoys special rapport with



her. Though Paul at first thinks there is something lacking in the women, he later realizes that the insufficiency lies him and not in anyone else. This is why he is glad when she goes back to Baxter Dawes.

Both Walter Morel and Baxter Dawes are very earthy, physical men. Lawrence draws Walter, in particular, very vividly. Along with his deceit before marriage, drunkenness, savagery, self-pity, insensitivity hewing sympathy through his sheer vitality as well as his delegation of the most unimportant position in the household by the family. Baxter is the father-figure, a paler version of Walter.

### **Miriam's psychological struggle about Spirituality**

Despite of his psychological struggle, he feels inclined towards Miriam at Willey Farm. She is young and romantic who prefers to stay aloof even when she is with her family. Paul finds her sensitive and profoundly religious. She was shy and always ready to sacrifice things and yet feel happy. She always wanted to absorb the spirit of things. She was too similar to Gertrude in her ways of dominating over the soul of Paul. He hated this tendency of possessiveness and domination that was sickening. Though Paul and Miriam loved one another, they could not come closer and enjoy natural physical relationship. "She was cut off from ordinary life by her religious intensity which made the world for her either a nunnery garden or a paradise, where sin and knowledge were not, or else an ugly, cruel thing" (S & L: 170).

Paul realized that he could not belong to her and started developing anger for her soul absorbing nature. Even Gertrude hated her because of her holding on things. "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left" (S & L: 183) Gertrude echoed her own characteristic in these words that she said about Miriam. The intimacy between Paul and Miriam became so abstract in nature that there was no chance of any normal and natural relationship between them. Paul hated her for this. He soon realized that they were not lovers but just friends whom he always went for support and encouragement for his painting. He considered her a nun and thought that he does not talk to Miriam through the senses, rather through the spirit. So they could not love one another in common sense. Paul thought that one person would never be able to monopolies him, be everything to him, never. He found Miriam perfectly amiable but rather too hard. He never found himself free and independent in her company. He started getting more and more restless. She could not satisfy him and his old desire to be with her weakened day by day.



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