



## THE INTERPOLATIVE INTERPRETATION OF D.H. LAWRENCE'S, THE FOX AND JHUMPA LAHIRI'S HELL- HEAVEN.

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**Abstract:** *It always intrigues when stories set apart by nearly a century, eighty-two years to be precise, have traces of similarities. Human stories are about struggles, love, sacrifice, selfishness and manipulations and stories abound about this are sometimes gentle and subtle and many a times abusive and violent. The epics and sagas of this genre is mostly depicted in D. H. Lawrence's The Fox written in 1922, set in Berkshire, England during World War I, encapsulated in a novella. The psychological relationship of the three lonely protagonists in a gyre of love and hate is presented which is as always the misunderstood struggle of man and woman.*

*Jhumpa Lahiri's, Hell- Heaven is more subtle than Lawrence's narration but the underlying "fox" is always there. Set in Cambridge, Massachusetts about a Bengali family and a young Bengali man, the write-up is to differentiate the gossamer thin line of the fox vein in people and to bring the "Jekyll and Hyde" that is mostly played out in these two stories and the contrast that they offer.*

**Key Words:** *Fox, gossamer, manipulations, dimensional, prism, metaphorically, subservience, dualistic.*

"An impenetrable mystery is destined to hang forever..." - Joseph Conrad.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

A story or narration in the hands of a good story teller can represent something enchanting by the handling of the subjects and materials. The narrator has at his disposal to wave the magic wand to use fascinating objects, creatures, and the mass of people which can be used to intimate or become the mouth-piece to refer to something other than their face value. The interplay of words or gestures themselves can and does convey something or be suggestive even when it does not directly display something. Such is the use of words from simple to complex that it sometimes create even what the writer themselves have not encompassed or visualized and D. H. Lawrence and Jhumpa Lahiri has created that complex dimensional prism in their works, *The Fox* and *Hell- Heaven* and readers can get a whiff of it from their own perspectives and their interpretations and see the subtle similarities too. In Lawrence's narrative, the story commences in 1918, Bailey Farm with the sedentary life of two unmarried women, Jill Banford and Nellie March with an idealistic view of life. In spite of hardships, they are contented with each other, that is until the "fox" comes into their lives, the literal and the figurative, dualistic idea of the fox as a symbol of chaos trespassing and creating turmoil in their lives. The literal fox comes and create havoc with their livestock and thus touch their economy and livelihood and this symbol comes in the form of Henry Grenfel creating discord in their hearts; in one, hatred and in the other the finer emotions, and thus, life was never the same.

In "Hell-Heaven" the story is enacted a thousand of miles away from home. A married Indian woman Aparna finds herself as too removed from reality in a foreign place and tries to locate herself in that place, and in that state of mind loses herself in a quagmire as she slips slowly, not ensnared but as it is natural for the fox to steal without qualms, so too she falls naturally into that trap called love and the fox that stole her peace was Pranab Chakraborty. As the fox pounces and steals when the owner is lax, so too Shyamal was too busy with his career to care for the feelings of his wife and far away from India, settled in America, Aparna was longing for companionship with someone of her thoughts wave-length. But her daughter was too young for that and bogged down at home till the return of her daughter from school, she longs for that escape," I would return from school and find my mother with her purse in her lap and her trench coat on, desperate to escape the apartment where she had spent the day alone" (Hell- Heaven 49) and it was on



such a trip to escape from reality that Pranab tailed her and like the silent fox caught her attention and a lifetime of secret memories for her. " He confessed that on the day we met him he had followed my mother and me for the better part of an afternoon around the streets of Cambridge...He had trailed behind us along Massachusetts Avenue and in and out of the Harvard Coop..., until, finally, as we were climbing the steps to the Widener Library so that I could use the bathroom, he tapped my mother on the shoulder" (Hell-Heaven 47) and as the fox never lets up, caught up with her and metaphorically ate up her heart there.

## 2. THE CHARM, RESISTANCE AND INTERPOLATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXTS:

The fox is connected with ancient prehistoric lore as the symbol of cunningness and the myth is always associated with it as it slid in the grass like the serpent that coils on its unsuspecting victim," He slid along in the deep grass; he was difficult as a serpent to see,"(pg 3-4 The Fox) and it uses its stealth to steal and to gratify its hunger. There is no guilt associated with it."It stands for the life of the instincts, a mode of being shared by human and nonhuman creatures alike" .Out of the woods emerges the fox to steal and ravage the chicken coop but in the prelude for the bigger things to come it cast its spell on Nellie March when she was least expecting it, "She lowered her eyes, and suddenly saw the fox. He was looking up at her. His chin was pressed down and his eyes were looking up. They met her eyes. And he knew her. She was spell-bound. She knew he knew her. So he looked into her eyes and her soul failed her. He knew her, he was not daunted."(page 4. The Fox)

Nellie March also unconsciously had this prescient that her encounter with the fox was a portent for something to come and she anticipates that and true to a woman's instinct, Henry Grenfel assumes the fox's qualities as the narrative goes along and when she met him." The boy was to her the fox, and she could not see him otherwise", (page 8. The Fox ) but just at the first encounter the fox had cast his spell on her, so too, March was," already under the influence of his strange, soft ,modulated voice, stared at him spellbound"(page8. The Fox).Page 6.(Yamada Akiko).

Foxes are held as sly, perplexing and loathsome but Lawrence portrays him in an affirmative symbol of vital and wild life, the start of culture which the new world order is losing. He tempts March at the edge of the woods when her consciousness was down and he was successful in it," They met her eyes... She was spell-bound," and the fox and March in the split of a second shared a common wildness, a mysterious exchange of understanding and in her dream too she saw him as a hot brush burning on fire." Lawrence tells us that in the modern mechanized world we depend on mind exclusively and forget animalness which is related with the cosmos and we need to remember our animalness which is darkness."

March venture to the woods is to seek the fox unconsciously and she is more and more attracted to it, and the fox had stirred some long forgotten memories in her and a new stage develops when a young soldier, Henry visits their home and his " glistening look" caught March attention like a rabbit caught by a fox and she felt contentment and her longing to visit the wood was fulfilled. Page 9.(Yamada Akiko ).

Yet, Lawrence uses sleep and to stay awake as tools for assertion of the woman and the competing drives. It is envisaged in the following words," March looked back from the door. Jill! She cried in a frantic tone, like someone just coming awake. And she seemed to start towards her darling. But the boy had March's arm in his grip, and she could not move. She did not know why she could not move. It was as in a dream..."(The Fox) The struggle and tug is to stay true to Banford or to choose Henry for March, between a traditional or a new woman of independent nature and the three way relationship stands out as a representative of the difficulties and conflicts found when a woman of that time garnered a new awareness that she has the power over herself. This self-realization is symbolized by being awake or waking up. March only feels the heavy lid of sleep overcome her when she begins to be drawn towards a traditional male and female agreement with Henry or symbolically with the fox and depicts March attempting to stay awake, to keep hold of her newly found ability and sanity, to think for herself and remain independent, emotionally, physically, and to remain awake becomes imperative so as not to lean on the shoulders of a man. The message is that a woman would need to remain alert and the man should be aware to have the woman "yield" and "sleep" in him. (Unknown Labels).

## 3. NUANCED WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE:

The narrator, Usha's mother Aparna, develops a deep abyss of love from which she cannot come out for many years and that bottomless pit of unrequited love was in the form of Pranab Chakraborty and she was not the one who pursued him but he had his design for refuge in a foreign land on her till he became acclimatized with that culture, that is America. He saw her and tailed her and his purpose was that if he could not find some Indian there, specifically Bengali in America then he would be lost and he might go back to India , "He confessed that on the day we met him he had' followed' my mother and me for the better part of an afternoon around the streets of Cambridge...He had trailed



behind us...He wandered with us into Harvard Yard" just like a patient fox trailing his victim he followed her and slowly but gradually gained her confidence and her heart for his selfish ends.(page 60 Hell-Heaven )

Aparna (Boudi), brother's wife, as called by Pranab falls in love with Pranab, revealing her level of vulnerability despite her outer armour of cultural shield of the sari" The red and white bangles unique to Bengali married women, and a common Tangail sari, and had a thick stem of vermilion powder in the center parting of her hair". (Hell- Heaven. pg.61) Aparna's dissatisfaction was infiltrated by Pranab to his gain and ease of access for comfort and he knew it and took it to his advantage and like a dashing, swashbuckling knight caught her heart and forgot his loneliness in a foreign land.( Ivy Panda)

For Pranab, the situation was desperate and he needed a heaven, a haven, familiar environment he was used to in Calcutta to dispel the loneliness in his heart. He used Aparna "It was clear to me now that my mother was in love with him. He wooed her as no other man had, with the innocent affection of a brother-in-law"( Hell-Heaven. Page 67) to quench his cultural shock and as they shared a lot in common, music, food, poetry and politics and that aspects made him feel at home even though he was still in America and he made sure that the attachment was lasting and permanent for his comfort. The time Pranab spent with Aparna became more valuable to him and he became aware of the things that America offered, a situation indicated by him buying a vehicle and dating and marrying an American woman and that was when he detached himself slowly from Aparna and even the Bengalis and he set his roots there and let go and adopt the American life. (My paperhub.com)

#### 4. CONCLUSION:

The quest is who will thrive and who will survive or dominate in the new world order when women have come out of their shell of subservience and the gender roles and feelings dominate and the social strata dynamics change. Henry represents the fox or the dominating characteristics of men and when he decided to marry March, all he needed was to want something and he took it, just as the fox can just come and take a chicken. (The role of masculinity in the fox).Lawrence wrote strongly of family ties, societal pressures and the sexual adventures and misadventures of women and men, the most mysterious of all relationships and that mystery still continues with no end in sight as they, especially the women struggle and fight for control of their own bodies and equal pay for equal work.

In Hell-Heaven, Aparna metamorphosed from a shriveling woman in need of male attention to a strong woman as can be visualized towards the end of the story and it takes a long and winding course of time for generations of women to come up at par with men, if it can be called that but literature abounds and spread awareness that humans have the same dignity just as the air that we breath is the same for all. Yet, the mystery is still unsolved and untenable and the literature will still go on as Joseph Conrad says, written on a wedding ring in *The Secret Agent* " An impenetrable mystery is destined to hang forever....," and the conundrum of the male and female would go on. One thing is certain, one cannot exist without the other.

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