



Research Paper

Silas Marner: A Paradigm of Structural Development of Human Relationship and Its Impact on Human Existence

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ABSTRACT: Social connection plays the prime role in forming families and it results in attaining the state of being of human entity, diversified modes of human relationships and their full-fledged florescence in community. The contributory factors to these are some structural phenomena, like recognition and responsibilities, trust and tolerance, if there is any kind of obstacle, infraction or inadequacy in them, the relationship topples down, knocks off the course of life, and human existence experiences the severe denouement. This paper attempts to expose the over stated modern and new interpretations of the structural development of human relationship and its impact on human existence in George Eliot's famous novel, *Silas Marner* through the thorough study of its characters and their actions.

KEY WORDS: Human relationships, structural phenomena, human existence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are not alone at both birth and death. In between birth and death human beings are mostly in need of cooperation of others for anything they want to accomplish, because “we are born into the world vulnerable, weak, and in need of physical and emotional nurturing”[1]. Only human beings need a society to lead an interdependent life as they are neither “a beast” nor “a god” as the great Aristotle considers[2]. Human relationship with varied modes, this is why, necessarily takes place within families and societies. Human relationship is an “interpersonal relationships ... that account for how two strangers combine themselves into a single, relatively coordinated unit” [3]. According to Lewis [4], relationship is a “shared culture”. As a result, it may be termed as *social order*, *culture* and *world view* for its universality. Sometimes “recognizing” and “appreciating” make human relationship efficient and progressive [5]. This relationship contributes to our *survivability* and *existence* as May [6] says, “We rely on the strength of human relationships to survive and thrive”. And human existence definitely consists in individual identity and social values. Therefore, the stronger the human relationship is, the more likely to have human *survivability* and *existence* along with individual identity and social values will be. And if any relationship falls down, it severely hampers the *survivability* and *existence*, because “the value of the importance of human relationships is ... the foundation upon which everything else is built” [7].

Silas Marner has exposed these very practical truths of human relationships and their consecutive results and impacts on human existence, survivability and identity. In fact, George Eliot (1819-1880) profoundly scrutinized the ongoing relationships in Victorian families and societies. She also experienced several diversities of relationships and their ups and downs in her own life. Her own experience and intense observation on varied modes of relationships and their successive conditions encouraged her to create a very pragmatic theme of human relationships in *Silas Marner*. Considering all these things, this paper has been accomplished in order to measure the diversified modes of human relationships, identify the required phenomena as regulators for the development of any relationship, observe the impacts of human relationships on human existence, survivability and identity, and ultimately it expects the world to be a Utopia with successful and well-developed relationships.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

George Eliot hails humanity and human relationship in such a way that she signified human life rather than wealth. This situation is captured by Wiesenfarth[8] as he mentions, “The two most important events in *Silas Marner* are the theft of the gold and the coming of the child”. It is a clear depiction with utmost importance to the emergence and bondage of the humanity beyond the materialist world. *Silas Marner* holds a

great success as a “moral fable ... in terms of substantial real world” [9] for human relationship. Harold Bloom [10] critically finds *Silas Marner* as a “dialectic of harsh substance and sentimental surface”, “metaphoric” role for “idea of sympathy” which reflects humanity. The novel is a metaphoric exhibition of regeneration from harshness to softness, rigidity to sympathy and isolation to socialisation. *Silas Marner*, Blumberg [11] finds, shows a challenge against the Victorian and contemporary associations of capitalism with egoism, alienation, and a driving desire to secure one's own possessions. It is a direct opposition to the existential predicament.

Eliot's point of view, according to Zhang & Zeng [12], on human relationship as the “religion of humanity” and “a kind of life attitude rather than a religion for its putting emphasis on *humanity* instead of *religion*”. Actually, religion is for humanity and humanity is based on religion, because human moral behaviour grossly depends on religious doctrines. Shukla [13] finds George Eliot's belief in humanity as “a virtue in itself” which “symbolizes human love, knowledge, sympathy and compassion towards each other”. *Silas Marner* displays a situation where “individual bodies are ecologized, articulated as elements within more dynamic and interactive collectives ... for the continuities between natural and social history”[14]. It means a balanced human relationship is unavoidable for human existence as ecological balance is inevitable for the nature in the universe. The characters are set in such a state where “the choices they make in the face of a bewildering array of odds highlight the importance of freedom and responsibility”[15]. Koumakpai & Oladjeou [16] consider George Eliot as concerned with “human kindness, affection, and sympathy” through “religious aspects” for the wellbeing of humans and the members of community in *Silas Marner* are “linked together through traditional values ... to uphold the harmonious development of the society”. These reviews of diversified studies show multiple facets of *Silas Marner*, and at the same time, they lead to a new study in terms of human relationships with its structural phenomena, factors for their development and their influence on human existence and survivability. This paper attempts to address these portfolios of human relationship.

III. OBJECTIVES

This research paper aims to focus on the diversified human relationships in *Silas Marner*, to identify the factors affecting the relationships, to scrutinize how the factors help in the development of the relationships and to evaluate the impact of human relationships on the human existence towards the meaning of life in reality.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This current study addressed some questions: what kind of human relationships are found in *Silas Marner* (?); which factors do really affect to the human relationship (?); how do the factors contribute to the development of the human relationships (?) and what is the impact of human relationships on human existence for creating the meaning of life (?).

V. RESEARCH METHODS

The study has adopted the qualitative approach. Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study with textual references and analytical discussions and references. The novel *Silas Marner*, the holy Qur'an, different scholarly articles and websites have been consulted as both primary and secondary sources.

VI. DIFFERENT MODES OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN *SILAS MARNER*

The unities within both families and societies effectuate diversified modes of human relationships, that is, they are connected through different names and titles of relationships, i.e., father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, neighbor, even lover, beloved and so many. George Eliot is very much concerned about these relationships and she has introduced some of these varied relations in the plots of *Silas Marner*. They are exhibited in the table below:

Human Relationships	
Characters in <i>Silas Marner</i>	Names of the Relations
Silas Marner and William Dane	Friends
Silas Marner and Sarah	Lover – beloved
Silas Marner and Religion	Belief
Godfrey Cass and Molly Farren	Spouses
Godfrey Cass and Eppie	Father – daughter
Silas Marner and Eppie	Father – daughter (adopted)
Silas Marner and Dolly Winthrop	Neighbors
Godfrey Cass and Nancy Lammeter	Spouses
Aaron Winthrop and Eppie	Play mates, Friends, Lover – beloved, and Spouses

Table (1)

VII. STRUCTURAL REGULATORS FOR HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

Any kind of human relationship, whether they will develop or not, is determined by some structural phenomena or regulators which are found through the analysis of diverse modes of relationships between and/or among characters, their nature of development with the continuation of plots in the novel *Silas Marner*. The phenomena, as regulators for human relationship, are as shown in the diagram:

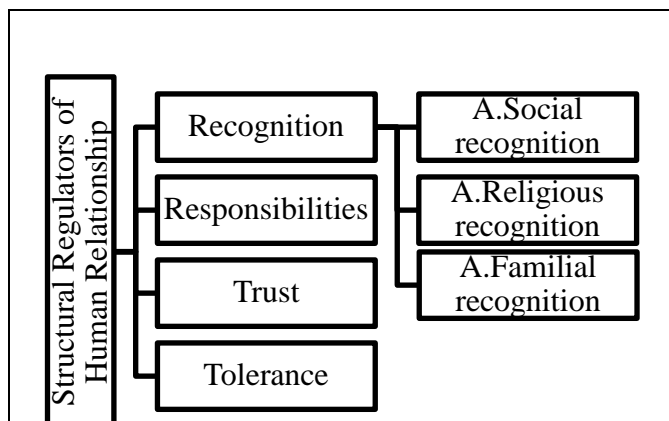


Table (2)

Recognition refers to the “acknowledgement of the existence, validity, or legality of something”[17]. It is one of the imperative phenomena of any human relationship, and it is, in terms of the truest sense, the base and foundation with three layers, i.e., familial, social and religious recognition, with which the relations get sustainable, accelerated and profoundly bonded.

We the human beings are extremely feeble and vulnerable from the very beginning of our life. We cannot but depend on a family for our protection and preparation for the challenges we are to face in the years ahead. So, we cannot think of any relationship without the familial recognition. Besides, family provides a great refuge in case of any problem related to the relations. According to Boele-Woelki and Fuchs [18], “...protection is due for ‘family life’ when a *de facto* family exists and the members of that have existent, effective and close links. If there is no ‘family life’ in sense of the ECHR (European Convention on Human Rights), there can be no interference.” Again, social recognition can be defined, according to Robert Purdy [19], “as the process whereby ... (all) create meaningful relationships with each other, ... (it) improves communications, but it also makes all ... more accountable because no one wants to openly let down their peers, (and it) is a powerful tool that connects all ... in a way that makes everyone equal.” Human being is also called *social being*, that is, we cannot live, do, tell, even thing anything without the connectivity with society. We are strictly subject to the social norms, ideologies and principles that cannot be transgressed if we don’t want to lead a wild and beastly life. The third layer of recognition is religious recognition. Actually, religion is “a sense of responsibility for the formation of thought and belief, for the promotion of high principles of human morality for the establishment of good relations among members of the society and the elimination of every sort of undue discrimination” [20]. In practical senses, religion dictates and controls believers’ all varieties of activities happening in life. It also makes them feel happy and spiritually contented. This is why, any kind of relationship recognized by religion takes a smooth way to be developed.

Responsibility is the name of ‘a duty to help or take care of somebody because of position’ [21]; the position is in the name of relations. Every kind of relationship strongly requires some sorts responsibilities, such as – respecting to each other, loving, sharing and caring, understanding others’ feelings and emotions with empathy, regular communications and some other liabilities as to the nature of relationships, in order to actualize the commitments on which peers are bonded. Responsibilities to each other facilitate the relations to be developed, otherwise the relations get slow down and come to an end soon as Scheffler [22] claims “one’s relationships to other people do in fact give rise to special responsibilities when they are relationships...”

“No two beings, and no two situations, are really commensurable with each other. To become aware of this fact is to undergo a sort of crisis” [23]. As a result, tolerance is must for every kind of relationship, because this phenomenon will teach one “to accept or tolerate somebody or something, especially opinions or behavior that one may not agree, or people who are not like the you” [24]. Tolerance is also supposed to be “a regulative mechanism of human relations, as a norm of civilized relations, as a factor of interpersonal understanding, as social cost” [25]. Actually, in our familial and social context, relationships take place between (and/or among) people deriving from diversified backgrounds, that is, different families, societies, cultures, religions, ethnicities, nations and many more. All the people connected to each other may have different and opposite opinions, choices, beliefs, outlooks, attitudes, characteristics, habits and so on. In such situation, we have no other way but

to establish a temperament of tolerance, acceptance and harmony. Piren and Vasykiv[26] shows the effect of tolerance with deep introspection saying that the idea of tolerance "...that promotes harmony and progress is not just permissiveness, not tolerate attitude towards injustice, not abandonment of one's preferences, but a way to pondering of one's own actions and make constructive decisions". At the same time, we need to foster mutual love and affection, otherwise we will lose the capability of living in society and family but it is quite impracticable and unfeasible for human being.

The last, but not the least, criterion of relationship is trust. According to Lewis and Weigert[27], trust can be "...seen to include both emotional and cognitive dimensions and to function as a deep assumption underwriting social order". So, trust can be labeled as the *antivirus* of love and bondage in order to continue it safely and smoothly. The Relationships Indicators Survey 2011 carried out by Relationships Australia [28], finds a very crucial influence of trust, that is, lack of trust is one of the four reasons for relationship breakdowns. A quotation given by Covey[29] says, "Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships". So, the cognitive and emotional dimensions of trust greatly affect both psychological and outward bonding of every relationship, its progress and success with the passage of life.

VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS IN *SILAS MARNER*

The overstated structural regulating phenomena practically resolve whether the relationships get developed or collapsed down. A critical analysis has been accomplished on the subsequent development of some significant characters' relationships in *Silas Marner* on the basis of the said regulators for human relationships. The analysis is as follows:

In Lantern Yard, Silas Marner and William Dane were two bosom friends. The relationship of this friendship is consecrated with all kinds of recognitions. They had responsibilities and trust upon which Silas and William have access to his personal and private life, that is, Silas got accompanied with William when he resolved to meet Sarah, Silas' beloved. All these phenomena smoothly geared their friendship up. But the villainous inclusion of William as the third person in between Silas and Sarah and the extra-affair (like extra-marital) relationship between William and Sarah proved a great disloyalty as a good friend. Later, William tremendously contravened his responsibilities and trust by making Silas falsely accused of theft and by marrying Sarah. Ultimately their relationship tumbled down forever.

Silas Marner and Sarah are lover and beloved in the novel *Silas Marner*. Actually, this kind of man-woman relationship takes place only by conforming to the inducement of mind and immoral indulgence of illusion and infatuation. This is why, it happens having no familial, social and religious recognitions. Nevertheless, it is a wide spread relationship which also requires responsibilities, trust and tolerance for its successful development and ultimate maturity. With such facts, Silas-Sarah's affair got a full swing, it was about to attain a final stage of being united through their marriage fixation. But Sarah did not tolerate Silas' accusation of theft, rather enthused to another affair with William Dane and ultimately, they got married. Only the lack of tolerance, thus, caused the utter downfall of Silas-Sarah's relationship. Here mentionable one thing is that there are much more possibilities to be weak gradually towards the third person of opposite sex exposed to, and to establish a new extra-marital or extra-affair relationship when the relation faces any problem. This was the real problem of Silas-Sarah's affair.

From the dawn of human existence in the world, there have been a well attachment and affinity between human beings and religion on the basis of faith and compliance. Religion is the habitat and sanctuary of optimism and probability for the believers at the time of mundane distress, frustration, deprivation and oppression. But if the religion misguides or deceives the believers through superstitions, fallacies or malpractices, all sorts of responsibilities to and trusts in religion topple down, and tolerance is exhausted to its ultimate end. The same thing happened with Silas Marner in Lantern Yard. His false accusation of theft and its corroboration by the draw of lots, the hypothetical divine system to identify the culprits, were nothing but the man-made prejudice, perverted interpretation and disparaging ritual of the Methodist sect of Christianity. Silas felt deceived and he, then and there, terminated all his faith in and affection for religion. Silas and the faith in religion and God took two opposite directions.

Godfrey Cass, a man of higher-class society, and Molly Farren, a maid servant in an inn, are spouses in the novel. Godfrey made this marriage secret to his family and society lest he should be dismissed from the legacy of his father's property, humiliated in the society, and lose Nancy, a young pretty lady from another rich Lammeter family. This marital relationship, consequently, received only religious recognition rather than the familial and social recognitions. Godfrey, thus, was very indifferent and uncaring to Molly and their new born baby, Eppie. Responsibilities and trust have been disgraced tremendously. Molly did not tolerate it anymore and started getting addicted to opium. Ultimately, this relationship is awarded a despondent denouement with the saddened death of Molly at the very young age.

Godfrey Cass is the biological father of Eppie. Eppie, like her mother Molly, did not achieve the social and familial recognition as the daughter of Godfrey. Responsibilities of a father are totally a big zero (0) when Eppie became absolutely deserted just after the death of her mother, and when no one including Godfrey claimed her guardianship. This negligence of recognitions and responsibilities annihilated all kinds of possibilities to develop an eternal relationship between father and daughter. Long days after Godfrey came to Eppie at her sixteenth with the assertion of fatherhood but she could not accept it because she had no way to have any trust in such a fraudulent father who had left her in so a destitute condition. Ultimately situation got callous and pathetic, at the same time impossible to restore.

Adopted father and daughter, Silas Marner and Eppie, are the manifestations of a thriving relationship in the novel. This type of relationship is recognised all the ways. With every possible phenomenon Silas did his utmost to bring up Eppie, and she was also so caring to her father. Their relationship, thus, developed in full swing with mutual responsibilities, strong trust and tolerance at all conditions. It got a full-fledged florescence through Eppie's comment at the time Godfrey and Nancy came to claim her guardianship:

"Thank you, ma'am--thank you, sir, for your offers--they're very great, and far above my wish. For I should have no delight i' life any more if I was forced to go away from my father, and knew he was sitting at home, a-thinking of me and feeling lone. We've been used to be happy together every day, and I can't think o' no happiness without him. And he says he'd nobody i' the world till I was sent to him, and he'd have nothing when I was gone. And he's took care of me and loved me from the first, and I'll cleave to him as long as he lives, and nobody shall ever come between him and me"[30].

Another full and fledged mature relationship is between Silas and Dolly Winthrop, two neighbouring characters in the novel. As neighbours, they are concerned about their own responsibilities; especially Dolly helped Silas in every way in order to bring up Eppie since Silas was completely unaware of rearing up a child. Silas's trust in Dolly facilitated develop a very positive relationship and Dolly's tolerance for every hassle of taking care of little Eppie made this relationship stable and steady.

There is another unbeaten relationship between Godfrey Cass and Nancy Lammeter, the spouses in the novel. Unlike Molly, Godfrey overtly married Nancy, and thus there was no obstacle to have familial, social and religious recognitions for this marriage. In conjugal life Godfrey is so loyal and responsible for his wife and so does Nancy for Godfrey. Trust in each other is also strong, but stronger their tolerance is. Godfrey's patience for Nancy's incapability of having children of her own, and Nancy's tolerance, on the other hand, for Godfrey's "natural irresolution and moral cowardice" [31] and the secret marriage made their relationship unwavering and smoothly continuous till the end of the novel.

Aaron Winthrop and Eppie are play mates at childhood, friends at juvenility, lover – beloved at young age and spouses at maturity. Multi-faced relationships they experienced and enjoyed to their full content, and they were so serious with their every relationship. But Aaron was much more concerned about getting their relationship recognised through marriage rather than Eppie. She was resistant to change and alternated their relation as it was then.

"But I don't want any change," said Eppie. "I should like to go on a long, long while, just as we are. Only Aaron does want a change; and he made me cry a bit—only a bit—because he said I didn't care for him, for if I cared for him I should want us to be married, as he did" [32].

They were, anyway, mutually caring, sharing, loyal and tolerant. This is why, their relationship got a booming continuity and the novel also gets a happy and cheerful ending with their marriage at the church premises.

IX. IMPACT OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP ON HUMAN EXISTENCE

The existence of human race on the earth commenced with a bonded relationship between Adam and Eve, and since then human being has been obtaining their own survivability and individual identity with diverse modes of relationships, as in the Qur'an,

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male (Adam) and a female (Eve), and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other) ..." [33].

Human being's instinctive nature of sociality absolutely and extensively contributes to their existence based on their varied relationships. If the relations are well developed, the existence and identity must find their pledge and promise, security and guarantee, because "most people seem to render family ties as important for their identity and for the way they commit themselves" [34]. If the relations, on the other hand, rupture and come off due to the lack of the required regulating phenomena, it directly impacts on the human existence and their identity. *Silas Marner* is a striking evidence for it.

Human existence is also defined through the philosophy of existentialism. The existentialists are concerned with making life meaningful. The life is meaningful when it feels existent in the universe with certain essence, purpose and explanation; otherwise, it experiences existential crisis with dread, anguish, absurdity, alienation, frustration and nothingness. Existentialists, divided into two schools - one is theists another is

atheists, explain the meaningfulness of life based on their beliefs and thoughts. As a result, the responsibility of human being is to turn life into meaningful being through either the firm belief in God and religious practices or facing the irrational world with rational decisions what humans are responsible for[35]. Definitely good relation with human beings in family and society makes human life full of essence, meaning, and gives a feeling of existence as beings. Thus, almost all characters in *Silas Marner* are searching their existence of life through making a happy bond with people they are connected.

Silas' undeveloped relationships with Sarah, William and religion awarded him nothing but a life of seclusion without any social values and identity with the threat of survivability in Raveloe, a man keeping no faith in God and religion and retaining pessimistic view in the course of life, and a death in life that groped for existence in the crowd of humanity. Other worthless relationships among Godfrey, Molly and Eppie turned to a triangle divergence for their existence and identity. Godfrey's negligence to Molly resulted in having no familial and social identity as a wife, frustration, addiction to opium and eventual annihilation of her existence through her death at the very young age. For the same reason, like Molly, Eppie being a little baby of only two years became the victim of existential crisis having no identity in the society. She was about to be the captive of the ferocious clutch of her parents' broken relationship, and about to lose her survivability in the world due to Godfrey's not proclaiming their factual relationship unless Silas was there to protect her. And giving no identity to Eppie made Godfrey identity less, existence less and destitute in the kingdom of fatherhood.

Immensely blossoming relationships among Silas, Eppie, Dolly and Aaron gave them, especially Silas and Eppie, back the meanings and significances of life, familial and social identity with a secure existence and survivability and the revival of faith in God and religion with optimism and tranquility. Actually, relationship with Dolly reshaped all these things in Silas' and Eppie's life. Eppie, in addition, achieved the fulfillment of every sort of identity and existence of her womanhood entity through the relationship with Aaron. Another successful and fully booming relationship is of Godfrey and Nancy. In spite of suffering the pangs of having no issue in their conjugal life, they never felt their existential or identity crisis, because they were very cooperative to embrace their own place and survivability.

X. CONCLUSION

George Eliot puts a great lesson for the humanity by portraying the paradigms of human relationships and their causal explanations and examples of their development and/or downfall. For this reason, litterateurs, as the author believes, are the torch-bearers and preachers of humanity. As Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* exposes the malpractices of politics through Lilliput, human flaws and follies through yahoos, at the same time he also directs the human beings towards the righteous ways through describing the faction and fraction free, loyal and moral, benevolent and broad-minded Brobdingnagians, and the sympathetic and strict, well-mannered and behaved Houyhnhnms. Anyway, we are the only creature who is endowed with conscience, logic, reason and capability of overcoming any adverse situation related to our lives and relationships. We should not have or create any problematic relationships; rather we should always achieve the successful relationships, because we deserve it according to our inborn potentiality and adaptability. In this regard, if we are concerned enough about the required regulating phenomena -recognitions, responsibilities, trust and tolerance - humanity must not go to the dogs through relation-related frustrations, hurts, broken hearts, suicides, existential and identity crises and so many kinds of unbearable sufferings; children must not get any uncertain orphan life, and elderly parents must not be at the asylums. The world is waiting for such a future where every human being must live their lives with safe survivability, excellent existence and undying identity on the basis of unbeaten human relationships.

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