

Doris Lessing and Feminism: Analyzing the Inner Conflicts and Disturbing Experiences of Protagonists

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Abstract: Doris Lessing is a prominent author and a feminist campaigner of all ages. The diverseness of her work unveils the author's significant individuality with respect to inflexible philosophical situations. Focusing on serious societal issues arising out of the relegation of woman in the society dominated by men, reflects her intense scrutiny on women's problems. Her fictional works signifies a detailed examination of marital, community, ethnic, monetary, dogmatic, emotional, cultural clashes, and sexual harassment met by females in the male-controlled structure of society. Through her protagonists - Mary Turner, Clefs and Anna Wulf, she shows a new horizon for activating power, liberty, privileges, and genuineness of women of that era and hence attained a good reputation, admiration, and worldwide individuality among observers, bibliophiles, specialists, investigators, critics, and intellectuals.

Key Words: Feminism, Revolt, Male-dominated Society, Empowerment

Introduction: Doris Lessing, a Noble laureate is an unparalleled novelist in English Literature around the world, holds an exclusive place as a revolutionary, society and politics honest critic of almost domineering rank. Lessing pursuits for new-fangled models to connect the proficiencies of an impassable feminist writer, who passes her primary years in Africa, becomes dynamic and a disappointed communalist, who is a governmentally stanch writer. With her very profound and indirect boldness, Lessing desires to project women's psychosomatic encounters between matrimony and love; parenthood and work, iniquitousness of the twofold standard; estrangement of a sole career person; void of marriage in the outmoded order and culture. Lessing describes her women folk in many societal difficulties and with several views of Lessing searches for new models to communicate the experiences of a blocked woman writer, who is a politically committed writer, a mother, a wife, or a mistress sometimes a woman. With her very keen and subtle attitude, Lessing attempts to rouse females to object the patriarchal system through her writings.

The main aim of the study is to examine the inner conflicts and disturbing experiences of influential protagonists - Anna Wulf (The Golden Notebook), Mary Turner (The Grass Is Singing) and Clefs (The Cleft).

Lessing and her Works:

The Golden Notebook: The main protagonist of “*The Golden Notebook*” is Anna Wulf, an author from Africa and living in London. Anna married a German refugee Max during the world war two and then with her daughter Janet migrates to London after getting a divorce. She was having an affair with Michael and a deep alliance with Molly.

Anna became a victim of severe life crisis in her thirties, disappointed by communalist politics under the rule of Stalin, felt hesitant about herself and her literary profession. To get her life on the right track, she takes the help of 4 independent notebooks with four different colors.

The novel deals with war, communism, Stalin, emancipation and sexuality. Lessing’s envisioned effort and novel’s theme is disintegration. The protagonist Anna writhes a psychological breakdown, reverberating the misperception and essential compartmentalization of the narrative. Anna analyzes herself and finds herself trailing her mind. This is an unswerving sketch of the protagonist trying to steer her experiences, family life, politics and her own feelings.

The main character in these four notebooks is a Free Women concentrating on a diverse form of experience: The Black Notebook describes her time (Anna) in South Africa and her outstanding book “Frontiers of War”. The Red Notebook projects Anna’s radical opinions and her assertiveness with respect to Communist Party. The Yellow Notebook encompasses “The Shadow of the Third” – focusing on a wedded male and his lover dealing meanderingly with Anna’s marital life and her relation with her x-husband Michael Lessing projects onto Ella and Paul two fictional characters. This notebook is of enormous prominence as Anna’s riven character parallels to the prescribed disintegration. The character is unjust because she perceives all the facets of her life discretely. She tries to maintain an evenness within her persona. So, she wrote another book and named *The Golden Notebook* from which the novel drives her name. Her diverse experiences are given an accord which supports to normalize her disparity in her mindfulness.

Lessing articulates creativity by labeling an oppositional option for their imaginary protagonists, as per their narrow choices in society like the choice made between matrimony and death, as no negotiation is offered to them. Progressively, women got more privileges and consequently more options.

The Golden Notebook substantiated that females cannot be liberated completely. As Lessing entrenched her main character in the sixties greater social light and finally accomplished to portray the approach in which men and women associated with each other during that time. Possibly Anna Wulf prospered in accomplishing entirety. Though, she thrived in discovering a life, where the protagonist can have a better love-life and has the capacity of dealing with society’s men as well as the men’s preconception regarding “Free Women”.

The Grass Is Singing: It is an account of woman’s suppression who was crushed and disillusioned by the intimidation of race, femininity and other societal discernments. Mary Turner, the protagonist faced separation, emotional and economic bareness and emotive blankness are all that subjugated her entire life. She

writhed from slackness and worthlessness of ill-matched matrimony. Turner was enforced by the community to receive unhappy nuptial alliance that she faced during her childhood because of the broken marriage of her parents. She had never failed to rival the ambiguous emancipation she innate from her mother.

The woman who marries Dick learns sooner or later that there are two things they can do: they can drive themselves mad, tear themselves into pieces in storms of futile anger and rebellion; or they can hold themselves tight and go bitter. Mary with the memory of her own mother recurring more and more frequently, like an older, sardonic double of herself walking beside her, followed the course her upbringing made inevitable (Lessing, 1950a:110).

She was finally killed on the excuse that she fitted to the frailer sex by a black slave. Lessing unfolds the psyche of woman in the center of the obstructions caused by race, gender and class barrier.

Various unrecorded colonial Africa's laws are commonly stated in the story which assist as suitable support for an egotistical form of exclusivism.

The strength of the author lies in the examination of psychosomatic struggles within personages in the book. For example, Lessing's unescapable re-counting of the prejudices and mortifications and desensitized behaviors received by the populaces permits us to know reasons for murder, just greyer tireless examination of Mary Turner's intelligence and reactions empowers us to understand the thoughtless approach followed by people.

The Clefts: The edging description in *The Cleft* is intended to disclose the effort of a fabricated Roman historian endeavoring to collect written chronicles of verbal past about the ancestries of manhood. All through the representation of this primeval era and as the redrafting route verves along, the nameless storyteller shows growing ciphers of concern regarding the essay as understood by the readers.

'Of whom I am—I was—one. What I am about to relate may be—must be—speculative, but it is solidly based on fact'..¹

His only goal is to reestablish the veracity, he needs to disclose that in the past, and men were dominated and also sometimes victimized by women.

The entrenched story relates with a prehistoric women community known as The Clefts who used to live along the sea adjacent to a gigantic rock whose clefts represented their womankind and the places where human sacrifices were held. Women had children via parthenogenesis and male kids were thrown out from the cleft on the pretext that they are a form of Beasts or Squirts. The male kids were though rescued by eagles who took

¹ LESSING, Doris, *The Cleft*, London: HarperCollins, 2008.Pg-80

them to their nests. The offspring were then suckled by a zealous doe. It created an initial idea for the creation of two distinct groups which were destined to meet together and indulge in the process of reproduction.

When young Clefts and Squirts met each other over the peaks, a sense of alienation created especially for a female who then returns to the sea shore. The young ones start disparaging the older ones by calling them ‘sea-slugs’, considering them wicked because of their sluggish behaviour: ‘*Large, flabby Clefts, their flesh all about them in layers of fat—there they lay with their legs sprawled, and their clefts were fatty and full, with pale hair growing over tongues and pulps of pinkish flesh. Ugly, oh so ugly, thought these girls who had shuddered at the little Monsters’ pipes and bulges*’². When the young clefts become aware of the sexual differences, illogicality and varied moods become apparent. But it also seems that the cleft is related with linguistic acquirement. Females represent themselves as great mothers though many times they behave in a hard-hearted manner when marshaling of the male kids and become entirely bereft of kind mother instinct.

The Cleft refers to feminine genitals and is related with means about the regular roles of menstruating and becoming pregnant and giving birth. The tribe’s symbol is ‘*We are the Cleft and the Cleft is us*’ (9-10)³. Their Cleft is later demolished by the clan of males and the females were destined to vacate their home and follow their path. With the birth of the unheralded extraordinary boy—the coherence of their clan is unexpectedly pushed into jeopardy.

Conclusion: Though often Lessing's novels and life have always portrayed her as a feminist, but assuredly she is of an uncommon kind. Almost all her works are centered on women and all her men are subordinate characters, or ethereal figures. Lessing has shaped a protagonist who adapts to the egalitarianism idyllic. The protagonists apart from progressing herself also helps her husband or partners to grow. Despite living in a society dominated by men she, repeatedly in her relationship, helped her lover know himself. When she is all alone at the end, she has tailored herself in such a way that she can play a positive role in upgrading the thinking of the society. In fact feminism can have no superior image than this.

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² LESSING, Doris, *The Cleft*, London: HarperCollins, 2008. Pg-80

³ LESSING, Doris, *The Cleft*, London: HarperCollins, 2008.