

**Feminine Psyche and Sensibility: A Critical Study of the
Select Novels of Doris Lessing**

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ABSTRACT

Feminine Psyche and Sensibility is an endeavor to discharge women's from those structures that have minimized and limited them just to home and hearth; it is additionally an endeavor to reinterpret their situation on the planet. In the male-centric framework, the women lost her significance and got lesser position in the public eye; it is also an attempt to reinterpret their position in the world. In a patriarchal system, the woman lost her importance and got a lesser position in society; she became simply the puppet in the hands of the man; just dependent and inferior. Her status throughout everyday life and her character are characterized in connection with the male individuals; wings of her creative ability are cut off and they are determined as the psyche.

Keywords: Detachment, Psyche, Sensibility, oppressed, puppet, inferior, patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century, especially the post-war period, has witnessed the extreme barrenness. For that reason, it has been precisely regarded as the 'age of separation'. In this age, man encountered alienation, disturbance, disintegration, disillusion, and absurdism. In this

postmodern age, various disciplines try to explore human mind and behavior. Psychology shares its basic ground with literature. As we know these two disciplines will always have to turn to one another for help and one can't overthrow the other. In psychology "psyche" refers to the state of mind as the central force in consideration and sentiment, which decides the behavioral pattern and unconsciously adjusting or meditating the responses of the body to the social environment. The study of feminine psyche and sensibility is an attempt to release women from those structures that have marginalized and restricted them only to home and hearth; it is also an attempt to reinterpret their position in the world. In a patriarchal system, the woman lost her importance and got a lesser position in society; she became simply the puppet in the hands of the man; just dependent and inferior. Her identity is defined in relation with the male members; wings of her imagination are cut off and they are determined as the psyche. For the self-knowledge and the self-realization of the contemporary woman, it may not only be important to be conscious of the attitude whether introverted or extroverted and of the basic psychological function that is thinking, sensation, consciousness, feeling but also to understand which structural form of the psyche corresponds best to her personality. This structural form must not essentially correspond with the external form of life, nor does it involve anything on the subject of the character or the human and cultural level. Female novelists present an insider's vision of the feminine psyche and feminine longings, their inner turmoil and their weird responses to men and things. The creative content of a woman writer reflects her mental picture and outlook; though her sensibility differs from time to time and it reflects the social ethos. Feminine sensibility is most visibly indicated by the choice and the treatment of themes, the choice of characters, the viewpoint, the style and the vision of a woman writer. Psychoanalysis is an effective tool adopted by feminists not a displacement of the history of sexuality and gender studies, but as questioning them, as containing the possibility of a different way of understanding gender repression and psyche of females.

The profundity of Lessing's recognition for enthusiastic and psychological detail is her style of sincerity and genuineness, the one of a kind method for exhibiting her characters and their fight back for adoration and truth, her high knowledge clarifies that why amid her lifetime she got such a significant number of scholarly honors and why such a large number of her books are viewed as works of art. She was not simply a feminist author, a label she repeatedly rejected despite the Nobel Committee calling her 'an epicist of the female experience' but she was a documenter of human experience. Her writings certainly contain the subjugation of women in powerful detail. She deals with the experiences of women, their aims, anxiety, stress, sensibility and consciousness. She provides a deep insight into the women's mind and portrays their relationships both to the male counterparts and to the society. Furthermore, the circumstances of disappointed middle-class women and their revolt against the patriarchal society is, without any uncertainty, the point of departure for their quest. In her novels, women protagonists experience that they cannot be recognized as individuals because of the fact that they are tied to their social demands and biological needs, but on the other hand, their longing for love makes them obedient and sensible to their male

counterparts. Women's fight against family oppression manifests itself predominantly in their search for freedom and independence. It is also worth pointing out that not only the position of the suppressed women but also the position of the black people is taken into consideration in the analyzed novels.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

“Whatever you are meant to do, do it now- The conditions are always impossible.”

-Doris Lessing

Doris Lessing is the most significant woman writer of the second half of the twentieth century. Her aptitude, talent, and concerns with the human beings and this world carry her international recognition, praise and she was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 2007. She is a creative writer of more than fifty works, a ground-breaking individualist, a maverick thinker, and intellectual, she always refused adherence to formal ideologies. Yet she was a pious Communist for years, a Marxist, a socialist, a feminist, a Sufi seeker, and a self-appointed cosmic anthropologist. Lessing's choice to her classification is her adoption of a holistic visualization that embraces disintegration, breakdown, and oppositions, stemming from her belief in a humanist philosophy. Lessing is concerned in encircling several issues from personal experience to social problems; from realistic stories to scientific fantasies such things describe her as a visionary writer. As a novelist, her fiction is largely concerned with the human psyche, more primarily female psyche. Her exploration of themes concerning to the human condition such as anti-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-nuclear war, social justice, and gender equality certainly place her as a humanist writer, who believes that the major aim of the artist is to redeem society. She was born on 22, October 1919 to British parents in Kermanshah that time was known as Persia (now Iran). Her father Alfred Tayler, was working in the British Army. During the World War-I he was crippled, finally, he resigned his army job and start working in a bank as a clerk. Her mother, Emily Maude Tyler was a nurse. In 1925 she moved with her parents to South Rhodesia, now (Zimbabwe), the family shifted there for safe financial growth. Lessing spent her childhood with parents. Lessing attended school in Africa and she did not like the school much. At the age of 14 she left school and stayed at his father's farm, she was a passionate reader at the farm she wrote two novels but later she thinks that they are bad and destroyed both the novels. After this brief period on the farm, she returned back to Salisbury. In 1939 she was married to Frank Charles and both had a son and daughter, this marriage was not successful for her, the couple divorced after four years. In 1945, she married with a German Jewish namely Gottfried with whom she had a son namely, Peter. This marriage was also not successful for her and got divorce again. After that she took her son, Peter with her to London where she rapidly recognized herself as a writer. She made her debut as a novelist with an outstanding novel *The Grass is Singing* (1951). Hitherto the semi-autobiographical *Children of Violence* series also called the Martha Quest series for its main protagonist is largely set in Africa. The series comprises *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), *Landlocked* (1965) and *The Four-Gated City* (1969). It describes Martha Quest's arousing to

greater consciousness on every level and was revolutionary in its depiction of the mind and conditions of the liberated woman. As a Nobel Laureate, she deserves by virtue of her variety of themes and techniques. She has a special place in the twentieth century fiction writing and therefore, she fully deserves an exhaustive and detailed evaluation of her works.

DETAILED STUDY OF HER SELECT NOVELS

Doris Lessing made her first appearance as a novelist by publishing the novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950). The title of this novel has been taken from *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot where she gradually unravels the apparent monotony of romantic connotations of the title in reality. The novel, gradually unfolds the disintegration of the rational “self” of Mary Turner, the female protagonist, due to the interplay of several external forces on one hand and Mary’s insecure childhood, low self-esteem and marital inadequacy on the other. Heavily steeped in Freudian psychoanalysis, the psyche of the female protagonist is unfolded as the narrative proceeds further. The novel deals with human relations, social structures and racial prejudices in Rhodesian society. Not only does it speak against colonialism in Africa and has a feminist perspective but it also recognizes confusion and its consequence upon inner reality. The novel examines the relationship between Mary Turner and her husband Dick Turner a white farmer and her black servant namely Mosses. The novel does not unwaveringly explore the feminist causes. Still, Lessing’s portrayal of Mary Turner warrants a closer examination because of the unique psychological perspective Lessing brings to unfold the female psyche in the midst of gender, race and class barrier.

In her second novel *Martha Quest* (1952), and the first one from the series *Children of violence*, she focuses on the psyche of her female protagonist Martha throughout the series that is *Children of Violence*. Martha tries to conform to the social pressures and demands relating to her role as mother and wife. But her inner self does not identify with these given roles and thus her inner identity is confronted with the world. Her desire to liberate herself is so strong that she leaves her husband and even child without taking into consideration her responsibilities as mother and wife respectively. Martha feels trapped in her marriage and also develops a strong repulsion against her pregnancy. She finally rejects these roles only to find her real self and to reclaim her lost identity. Martha makes investigation of her own contemplations yet additionally seeks after a game-plan based on her psychological examination of other individuals thus connecting personal and collective experience. The entire arrangement centers on Martha’s life and inner psyche. Social pressures influence her to marry Douglas Knowell, with whom she does not appear to be satisfied. Literature means a lot to her, as it gives her another perspective on the world. Likewise, following her books of study, Martha soon becomes obsessed with liberation. Martha has severed all ties with the collectives that once had placed restrictions on her life. She now relinquishes her public self and asserts her inner character. She moves to London and also finds a job as a secretary to an aristocratic English novelist. The question of mental balance in an imbalanced world is one that Lessing undertakes in this novel.

In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Lessing develops the theme of the disintegration of modern society through Anna's emotional 'breakdown'. In this painful psychological experience, Anna breaks all the false notions that society has created in her. She moves through the Self's false dichotomies and divisions to "self-healing" which enables her to free herself. In her psychological action to resolve the tensions that those dichotomies have created in her, she triumphs over the destructive forces of division and thus asserts the individual's ability to achieve meaning itself. Anna is battling writer's block and the chaos of life itself. In dealing with this psychological crisis, she keeps four notebooks while working on her fictional novel "Free Woman". In this novel, Anna Wulf sees her life compartmentalized into various roles like lover, writer, and political activist. Her diaries, written in different colored notebooks, each corresponds to a different part of herself: the black notebook treats her ideas and problems as a writer; the red notebook is concerned with her life as a politician, the yellow notebook is an autobiographical narrative reflecting her sexual relationships and feelings and the blue notebook tries to be an emotional crutch, recording her everyday personal events. Deftly, towards the end of the novel, she abandons this rigid compartmentalization and writes in the single golden notebook of the title. The self-knowledge which seems to be at the heart of Mrs. Lessing's theme in *The Golden Notebook* is clearly, than necessary for mental equilibrium and emotional stability, and is, at least in the case of Anna Wulf, capable of being gained through a psychological and mental descent into hell. Through writing, Anna is able to relate meaningfully again to the world and to those she knows.

In her novel *The Summer Before The Dark* (1973), hailed as a modern feminist novel, she dealt with the pressures of social conformity, the pain of aging and mental breakdown that a woman undergoes while searching for liberty from the restriction, self-awareness and questioning her domestic responsibilities. Kate Brown aged 45, the central character of the novel, sets on a psychological and imaginative journey, revealing the dilemma between fact and fiction, conscious and unconscious because of the alternation of her dreams with her experiences. Each experience, turning into an exploration, brings excitement into her life, helps her understand herself and confront with her past during the experience in summer before the dark in which Kate rejects the stereotypes of femininity believing that her conventional clothes do not fit her anymore. However, what Kate finds out about herself, in parallel with her dreams in which she sees "a wounded seal," appalls her and brings her face to face with herself and her fears of aging, loneliness, and death in the summer of exploration. Thus, this study aims to present, within the framework of psychoanalytic criticism, the psychological journey of a woman who questions her experiences and explores her self-awareness in parallel with the dreams she has seen during the summer of exploration before returning to the dark.

CONCLUSION

In the above novels, the self-portrayal for the female characters is set apart by encounters between various ideological frameworks which characterize the expressions

females and persons as commonly conflicting. Every one of these books depends on the self-investigation of the female characters search for free women which are conceivable just through psychological improvement or investigation. Psychological investigation of the female characters helps them to recover their lost characters and individual flexibility. This mental investigation gives them a genuine feeling of fruition which thus encourages them to recapture or recover their lost characters.

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