



## A PEER GLANCE OF FEMINISM IDEOLOGY IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF DORIS LESSING

### English

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### ABSTRACT

Doris Lessing was one of the most successful writers in the 20th century. Doris Lessing portrays the fundamental problems of women as well as social system of her times. Lessing searches for new models to communicate the experiences of a blocked woman writer, who spends her early life in Africa, becomes an active and a disappointed communist, who is a politically committed writer, a mother, a wife, or a mistress sometimes a woman. With her very keen and subtle attitude, Lessing wants to present women's psychological conflicts between marriage and love; motherhood and profession, unfairness of the double standard; alienation of a single career woman; hollowness of marriage in the traditional order and society. Lessing portrays her women in various social problems and with various perspectives of male against female. She tries to awaken women community to protest against the patriarchy through her feminist writings. For this purpose, this research paper would like to examine the feminism ideology in the selected work of Doris Lessing, including- Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook*, Mary Turner of *The Grass Is Singing*, and *Clefts of The Cleft*.

### KEYWORDS

Doris Lessing, Feminism, Men, women etc.

### INTRODUCTION

Doris Lessing, an influential novelist for all ages, focuses on seriously social problems arising out of the marginalization of women in the male-dominated society. She is for all of us and for all times. She shows her keen observation on women's personal problems, which bear the testimony of universal dealing and appeals. As a feminist reformer, Lessing has enabled to portray women's social position in the bourgeois family. Her literary works expose an in-depth exploration of familial, social, cultural, economic, political, psychological, racial conflict, and sexual harassment faced by women in the patriarchal system. She has portrayed powerful female protagonists, including Mary Turner of *The Grass Is Singing*, *Clefts of The Cleft*, and Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook*. Lessing hopes to show a new horizon for implementing power, freedom, rights, and existence of women of the age. As a result, Lessing has not only achieved reputation, popularity, and international identity among audience, readers, professionals, researchers, critics, and scholars across the globe, but also occupied a highly reputed position in English literature.

### The Golden Notebook

The novel uses a large number of realistic descriptions, symbols and details description, with a degree of relaxation and being full of timeliness. Lessing's experience of never giving in to marriage, objection to racial segregation, and seeking equality between men and women, made her an admirable but controversial figure. Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007. The committee believed that the novel induced a rich association with women's experiences and it examined the divisive civilizations skeptically and farsightedly.

The protagonist of the *Golden Notebook* is a female writer, Anna Woolf. She used four notebooks to record her life and wanted to use the fifth one - the golden notebook to integrate the four notebooks, which finally helped her to restore a complete life. From the notebooks, it can be seen the colorful inner world of women and the complex life of women in all aspects. The novel depicts the true life of the protagonist. The black notebook records Anna's growing experience; The red notebook records intuitive views of liberal women on politics; The yellow notebook is a novel written by Anna; The blue notebook is a diary that records the personal experiences of liberal women. Lessing reflects the life of Anna in all aspects through notebooks. Anna wants to integrate the fragmented experience, but the diary did not help Anna overcome her identity crisis but exacerbated the deterioration. With the help of Saul, Anna integrated the notebooks into golden notebook and recovered from the chaotic state. Anna's recovery also helped Saul to find himself again. Through the experience of Anna and Saul, Lessing proved that men and women are not enemies, but collaborators who can perfectly cooperate. The four notebooks highlight the image of "liberal women". The purpose of the *Golden Notebook* is to explore the plight of writers who have social responsibilities in the lost and alienated period.

The relationship between men and women under "Phallogocentrism"

"Phallogocentrism" emphasizes that men are the center, while women are just the symbol of men's desire based on their own needs. Simone de Beauvoir, the founder of the feminist movement, said: women were "servants, demons, conspirators and cheaters in life, playthings of men, men's desires, and reasons for male destruction". In marriage, the husband was God and the absolute authority of the wife. Richard Portman was a typical male, and his wife, Mollien, was young, gentle, beautiful and quiet, but shortly after his marriage, he had affairs with many women. But he didn't have the slightest guilty.

The image of "liberal women" in the *Golden Notebook* Anna had ideals, living a relatively stable life. The profession of being a writer made her independent. Anna defined herself as a typical image of an independent liberal woman, and divorce made her free to fall in love with other men. However, these men chose Anna not because they liked her, but to satisfy their needs. Although Anna thought she was a free woman, she still wanted to get a marriage in her heart. In order to make life meaningful, she recorded her feelings and emotions in her notebooks. Anna believed that her four notebooks could help her escape from the chaos of reality and maintain the integrity of life. But because of the nature of personality, she was on the verge of collapse.

### The Grass Is Singing

In the novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, Lessing's strength lies in the exploration of psychological conflict and alienation among individuals. She wants to show a relationship between Mary Turner, a white farmer's wife and her black servant, Moses. Lessing's portrayal of Mary Turner warrants a closer examination due to a unique perspective. Mary is defeated and thwarted by the bullying of race, gender, and social restriction. Mary, the victim of such oppression, is unlike other characters of Lessing, as she is never been given any freedom. Alienation, mental and economic constraint, and emotional rift dominate her entire life. After her marriage, she suffers from laxity and meaninglessness of ill-matched marriage. She is forced by the society to accept loveless marriage that she experiences in her parent's home. As she grows up in a broken family, alienation and non-involvement subjugate her. Her life is tormented and afflicted by the wave of social insecurity, sexual harassment, and vacuum. Her struggle in the turbulent wave is intensified when the clutches of race and patriarchy dishearten her inner psychology. Gender discrimination as well as racial conflict is the dominant theme behind the predicament of sterility and alienation in Mary's life. A huge gulf that is created in her conjugal life compels her to be alienated herself from society and family. A dark abyss is manifested in racial discrimination through making a relationship between Mary and her black slave, Moses. He kills Mary to take vengeance on the white and the second sex. For this, Lessing portrays Mary as a victim of the menace of the patriarchy.

### The Cleft

In the novel, *The Cleft*, Lessing invites the modern reader and audience to imagine a mythical society free from sexual conspiracy, free from jealousy, free from petty rivalries: a society free from men. A Roman

senator contemplates what will likely be his last wish: the retelling of the tale of human creation on the cosmos. He recounts the history of the Clefts, an ancient community of women living in the Edenic, coastal wilderness, being confined to the valley of a mountain. Clefts have no demand nor knowledge of men-childbirth is maintained, like the sea-tides which lap around their feet via the cycles of the moon, and their children are always female. But with the unheralded birth of a new born baby, a discord of female community is accidentally thrown into jeopardy. The Clefts are ignorantly awestruck by a malformed baby, but threateningly many unfamiliar males appears like the nicknamed Squirts, being abandoned and exposed on the nearby mountainside, are sacrificed to the eagles, the genitals of female haven who are unbeknown to the Clefts. However, baby males exist, aided by wild eagles sent to kill Squirts; and thrive them on the other side of mountains. It is not until an eager young Cleft named Maire goes beyond the geographical, and emotional, divide of the mountain that a disquieting fact is uncovered, a discovery, which forces the Clefts to accept and realign themselves to the prospect of a new world, and the feasible vengeance of the erring males. In this novel, Lessing confronts head-on the themes that inspire her early works: how males and females, two similar and thoroughly distinct creatures, manage to dwell side by side in the cosmos, and how the specifics of gender affect every aspect of human existence. Lessing's representation of primary physical relation between Clefts and Monsters is brutal and direct. Lessing inspires us to fancy Clefts, a primitive community of women who dwell in the coastal wilderness, free from demand, wisdom, or conflict of men. Clefts live in harmony: impregnated by the tides of the moon and begetting female babies, who are spared the implications of gender, permeating modern existence. Lessing's *The Cleft* is a novel which bears the social position of women in the context of feminism. In this work, the story of the creation of men and women is represented by Lessing. Women who are called the Clefts are capable of conceiving babies without men thanks to their cooperation with nature. However, men are born out of the Clefts later as other members of nature to be the partners of the Clefts, as just the contrary of the traditional story of creation. The nature-bound women are always protective and conscious of nature while men call the Squirts is usually after adventure and danger.

Lessing reunites the different-natured women and men in respect for Nature and the indispensability of either parts in life and the life-creation process. At this point, she underlines the main philosophy of feminism due to its vitality for the future of the humankind and the sustainability on Earth. Feminism is the underlying theory of this study and among the main arguments of *The Cleft*, which shall be dissected into the details.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in a patriarchal society, women who want to seek freedom and equality need to overcome many difficulties. However, the most important thing for women in the gender war is not the final victory, but the accurate and sensitive self-cognition and the relentless pursuit of self and freedom. The researcher is of the view that Lessing's fiction, including *The Golden Notebook*, *The Grass Is Singing*, and *The Cleft* make important contributions for English literature, because we get a perfect social picture of Lessing's times. Lessing's portrayal of powerful heroines survives and exerts their presence in today's society in different facets of human life. Through their words and action, each of major heroine in Lessing's fiction appears as representative of any age. Lessing longs for a human society, where there would be no conflicts between males and females. If such a society exists, undoubtedly the world will be a beautiful place to live in.

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