CHAPTER- IV
BREAKING THE SOCIAL STIGMA OF WOMANHOOD

“Awareness of their own history and struggle is frequently nonexistent among women as a group. Yet it is toward such a search for a usable history that they must turn to build a still living and evolving past in order to shape their future as partners in society. We create a history in which man is no longer the measure....”

(Letty Russell, Human Liberation in A Feminist Perspective 81)

The patriarchal practices, which begin the oppression of woman at her own home, keep on reducing woman’s status at the social fronts as well. Sheila Rowbotham, in Women, Resistance and Revolution, uses the term “colonialized” (214) to show the oppressed status of women in the society. She cites “economic dependence”, “cultural takeover” and “the identification of dignity with resemblance to the oppressor” as some of the “similarities that exist between the colonization of the underdeveloped country and female oppression” (Rowbotham 214). A woman is considered to be an “embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge, she should be virtuous, chaste, submissive, homely, graceful, and devoted to the masculinity” (Bliss 44). She is supposed to seek pleasure in relationship with man. The faintest of any such ideas that every being “exists primarily for the realization of oneself can never occur to her in the wildest of her dreams” (Everett 317). These attitudes exemplify the belief that woman should not have any right of her own and she has only duties in relation to man. Man considers it as normal male behaviour to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical levels outside marriage, while it is ruthlessly condemned as adultery in case a woman indulges in it even though accidentally. At the slightest hint of any deviation on her part which may not even involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards woman and starts persecuting her.

Doris Lessing’s novels present women who revolt against the social norms of the patriarchal society. Toril Moi asserts the circumstances of patriarchal society,
“women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness and instead must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them” (57). Similarly, Holmquist describes social oppression of women as “a militant attitude directed towards female oppression in the sense of economic, political and psychological mechanisms which prevent women from realizing their full potential as human beings” (137). The oppression of women is presented in all the novels of Lessing, especially within the socio-political context. She considers the society an institution whose social function, unfortunately, prevents women from realizing their potential. At the same time, she stresses the importance of biological and reproductive female identity, which women cannot do without as they are biologically predestined to it. So, in her novels, all social and biological points of views have been explored which enable the contrastive elements to connect the individual and collective identities.

Doris Lessing has explored the contradictions and horrors of the violence ridden world, against women, through the story of Martha Quest. In fact, Martha's figure is silhouetted against the group of new generation as Martha carries on her struggle for an identity expanding beyond oppositions of male/female, black/white dichotomies in a multi-cultural yet separatist society. Betty Friedan views that woman has now become socially active and liberated. She says, “It has barely begun, the search of women for themselves. But the time is at hand when the voices of the feminine mystique can no longer drown out the inner voice that is driving women on to become complete”(TFM 166). Betty Friedan’s ideas are reflected in Lessing’s women characters. Elizabeth Maslen comments, “...when exploring women's issues, Doris Lessing is concerned to set up dialogues between self and group, between essentialism and social bodies, and that these dialogues are spread over several works, meshing into networks of other issues” (19). Her women protagonists search for new ways to realize their selves and to strengthen their position in society.

Martha grows in the agonies of growing up in an atmosphere of separatism and violence. Lessing portrays Martha's adolescence as a weapon for being too conscious of her surroundings. She rises to fight against all the lies, injustice and
inequality; sometimes she feels betrayed, therefore she suffers from time to time.

Simone de Beauvoir reveals the reality of patriarchal society:

> Woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality...almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man’s, and frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognized in the abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the mores. (xiv-xv)

Mary Anne Singleton views, “One of the problems in teaching the images of women in literature is fighting the depression which builds up as the essentially negative reflection is documented in story after story” (21). Martha ends her struggle at a place far away from where she was born, but among all this, the most striking point is that the journey veers inward aspects and thereby demystifies the outward social mystiques.

Lessing’s women are “boulder-pushers” (Lessing, GN 215); they are seekers of truth and fight against cruelty, slavery, and violence to build a balanced and nobler world “full of people who don’t hate and fear and murder” (Lessing, GN 604). She presents free woman who reacts against the passive acceptance of the social impositions. She chooses an independent way of life because it is less miserable than that of conventional woman. Freedom gives woman some happiness and independence to be one's original self, as Marion says, to “live as you like...Do as you like,”(Lessing, GN 275). Free woman is also exposed to dangers at every level and has to pay a heavy price in terms of her exploitation and harassment. However, she is psychologically stronger than earlier woman. ‘Free Women’ are usually taken as sex-hungry and men find them “much more exciting than the dull tied women,” (Lessing, GN 441) and are eager to have sex with them especially when their wives are away. Anna puts it:

> Now we free women know that the moment the wives of our men friends go into the nursing home, dear Tom, Dick and Harry come straight over, they always want to sleep with one of their wives’ friends. God knows
why, a fascinating psychological fact among so many, but it’s a fact.
(Lessing, GN 47)

Molly Hite also comments while discussing Lessing’s works, “paradoxically, a free woman is one who is available to men, whether or not she wants to play the roles of mistress, comforter, and therapist that they require of her”(Lessing, GN 49). But, Lessing’s women step out into man’s world with passion and zeal to acquire an active human identity.

Martha's struggle against stasis and her urge for crossing the social frontiers bring a new challenge to the society. Patricia Meyer Spacks relates Martha's feminine experience to that of the heroines of twentieth-century women's novels and argues that such women suffer new psychic burdens.“In fact, the weight of a new kind of self-consciousness, and that of the infinite possibilities of doing”(149). It is this burdensome self-consciousness that condemns Martha to an unstable and migratory existence, while the dilemmas of the infinite possibilities of doing confuse and mislead. She adds:

Martha sees no clearly desirable forms, no viable models, no real hope. Suffering the miseries of a transitional state without knowing what she is in transition to, ... Martha feels the obligation and the impossibility of understanding: a twentieth century heroine, she must invent the problem as well as solve it, …discover the ends of life before pursuing. (Lessing, FGC 67)

However, it is not Martha alone who nurtures the dream of starting a new life in the town because she feels that life in the Kopjes is no life at all, for it never gives one the feeling of being at home. Like Martha or many white women, she feels claustrophobic; she feels that she is living in the remotest point of the world and none in the future would help her to survive from this atmosphere.

Doris Lessing explores the various mystiques related to female selfhood, together with race, culture and world politics. Martha's individuality must be seen in terms of her dialogue with her inner self and the outer collective constituted by a
multicultural yet segregated society and hyperactive and hypocritical political games. Her relationship with her parents, her sexual adventure, her search for political identity are the key areas where Martha Quest longs to strive for and obtain a unique and sublime position in society. In a nutshell, she struggles from entrapment to liberation and the painful recognition of having a hybridized identity. For this, woman goes to struggle and fight against the social boundaries created against her. Sandra Lee Bartky senses it as a female consciousness towards feminine issues. And this “feminist consciousness is consciousness of victimization” (74). Throughout her life, Martha fights against the social forces that appear to bog down her freedom and autonomy of herself. She does not give up her quest half way through. It is this spirit of Martha that brings her out of the prejudices of her parents, of the narrowness of the Communist Party and finally enables her to survive a holocaust. Even after the disillusionment of an apocalypse, Martha continues to see the vision of a new world to be sustained by the new generation.

Martha’s search for her real individuality is also her search for a world that is without the boundaries of conformist sex roles, political affiliations, racial and class status. She, leaving her white settler family in Africa, comes to London to look for a new world. Frederick R. Karl proposes that “The Four-Gated City begins with the sense of suffocation and strangulation in London. The key images in the first pages are of “grime, globules of wet, gritty smears, grease, thumb marks”(87). These “inside images” seem to represent the sense of “enclosure” and the feeling of a closed society”(Karl 87). She feels anxious in her relationship with people. Martha is unwilling to be confined to any place or relationship that is unable to represent her social abilities or inhabit what she feels is her true self.

Barbara Hill Rigney mentions that “Laing’s description of schizophrenia corresponds to Lessing that she sees it as, first, an alienation from the self, which leads to an alienation from other people as well” (70). In city, Martha gets a chance to look for her real self, “existing beyond the social mask” (Cederstrom 97). When wandering alone in the London city, Martha “experiments with the possibilities of surrendering identity, of obscuring the distinction between the self and the not-self…in the more easily controlled area of her own mind” (Rigney 129). Under the
protection of her old friend, Mrs. Van’s coat, Martha plays different roles in various situations until the division between her ‘self’ and ‘not self’ becomes blurred. She names herself differently with each different person. Martha calls “strange identities into being with a switch of clothes or a change of voice until one felt like an empty space without boundaries” (Lessing, FGC 30).

In The Divided Self, R.D. Laing examines schizophrenia from an existential perspective. ‘Psychosis’ is viewed as a consequence of a lack of congruity between self and others. When one tries to live out the “truth” of its “existential position,” to claim its real situation, which is not accepted by common sense, one has to pay the price of being mad” (Laing 39). But Martha does not get scared of any consequence as she hurts herself more than anything else. But, she is psychologically stronger than before and this feeling makes her independent, prominent and self confident even being in the male dominated environment.

Martha challenges the stereotype that woman has to depend on man for her identity. Her struggle is presumably caused by her deep introspection and self-analysis. As a result, she is too much preoccupied with particular fragments of her desired self that she cannot become an integrated individual. The issue of Male-dominance and Martha’s emancipation cause disturbance in relationships between men and women. Marriage is depicted in a conventional way, which Martha resents:

She thought confusedly that there was always a point when men seemed to press a button, as it were, and one was expected to turn into something else for their amusement. This ‘turning into something’ else had landed her where she was now,…signed and sealed away from what she was convinced she was. (Lessing, PM 14)

Stella is, in contrast to Martha, in accordance with these conventional social expectations, submissive to the social norms of the society. She comments on Martha’s appearance, “... you look awful, Matty, and it’s your duty to your husband to look nice” (Lessing, PM 16). Stella actually seems to be a prototype of a non-emancipated woman who respects the traditional laws of society with the role of man as a breadwinner, “You’re mad to work when you’re-married,” she explains to
Martha (Lessing, PM 23). Talking about men and their independence in relationship, Stella claims that it is necessary to manage men “without them knowing it” (Lessing, PM 29). They need to have independence and women must find the best strategy to make them tied to themselves. Martha is astonished at the way Stella and Alice speak about men, “Martha observed irritably that Stella and Alice are talking about husbands “as if they were a sort of wild animal to be tamed” (Lessing, PM 29). But, Martha is nowhere discouraged by Stella’s male oppressed attitude.

Lessing’s women resent society’s sexist assumptions, viz., the stereotype of women which define them primarily through their attraction or usefulness to men. Martha Quest does not want to be treated like a ‘sex-object’ and feels offended when Donovan Anderson, her first boy-friend in the town, displays her before his friends. Donovan feels proud of his ‘acquisition’ and makes her cynosure at sun-downer parties or cinema houses, “before the group of young ‘wolves’ or sharks who try to get girls in their grip” (Lessing, MQ 136). Donovan finds Martha a success as the crowd of young men greatly admires her for her fresh looks. Martha feels a threat to her individuality and freedom which is followed by a “strong resisting dislike of his pressure on her” (Lessing, MQ 157). She strongly resents the way Donovan “showed her off” (180) among his friends and decides to sever all relations with him.

Lessing exposes the double standards, the callousness, hypocrisies and indifference of patriarchal society against women. The society impels women to become slave to men. Men expect women to be submissive and dedicated without individual awareness. Richard, after leaving his first wife Molly and son Tommy, marries Marion and has three children from this marriage. Still he seeks pleasure with his secretaries and has a “succession of girls” (Lessing, GN 184). He treats Marion like a housewife or a hostess for his posh dinner parties, never as a human being who also needs man's love and affection for sustaining herself. She is virtually reduced to the status of a “nursemaid for the children” (Lessing, GN 278) and occupies a “position as prisoner” (Lessing, GN 376) at her home. When Marion complains about his girls, Richard asks her to have a lover. And when a man does get interested in her and is ready to marry her with all the three children, Richard
becomes jealous. Richard’s first wife Molly lashes out at him for treating Marion as a “stupid and insensitive woman” (Lessing, GN 49) and for his hypocrisies:

> You were worried about her being unhappy?” said Molly, laughing contemptuously. “No, your vanity was hurt. You worked really hard to make her in love with you again, it was all jealous scenes and love and kisses until that moment she broke it off with him finally. And the moment you had her safe, you lost interest and went back to the former secretaries on the fancy divan in your beautiful big business office. (Lessing, GN 48)

When out of frustration Marion starts drinking, Richard accuses her of being a “bad influence on the children” (Lessing, GN 48). And when she ceases to drink and devotes her energy to looking after her stepson, Tommy, who has become blind due to a suicidal attempt, Richard feels “wounded and blames her for not caring for him. She has no time for me”(Lessing, GN 376). In fact, he is making lame excuses to abandon her and continue his relation with his twenty-three old secretary Jane. In fact, man tries to trap woman for his physical pleasure only. Roger, Dick, Richard or Douglas, all are male chauvinists who rule their women with a very stem and stringent set of rules while themselves enjoying all the freedom. They use and abuse women as objects and their personal possessions and try to crush their ‘self’ in order to enslave them.

Martha’s inner self rejects the invitation of others to fit into their lives. Martha seems to stand outside of the home and look down upon herself from a position outside of a picture, and then resumes a sense of being situated in her body in the frame of the picture. Therefore, Martha keeps walking on the street and, in the act of walking, to look for “a soft dark empty space” in her mind (Lessing, FGC 51). By doing so, she “could move back in time, annulling time,”(Lessing, FGC 51) and she could be the real self who is beyond everyone’s expectation and who is not influenced by the society. Lessing defines her state:

> She sees herself as a young girl sitting under the tree where she could see a great hot landscape and a sky full of birds and clouds. But really, not in
imagination there she was…she was, nothing to do with Martha, or any
other name she might have had attached to her, nothing to do with what
she looked like, how she had been shaped. (FGC 52)

In fact, Lessing exhibits the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the
lives of women to the ideal standards of patriarchal society. This diversity leads
Lessing’s women towards the sense of awareness, consciousness, individual,
sensible and competent human self. Lessing presents the need of self expression and
self realization among her women protagonists.

For women, Doris Lessing’s all novels prove to be the medium for self
realization and self expression. Lessing stresses on the mature understanding of the
female psyche. She beautifully explores the various issues of women in her social,
sexual and domestic milieu. She deals with the quest for the competent human self
within woman and attempts to bring the recognition of women as individuals. In
Laing’s sense, the self “preoccupied with the figures of phantasies, thought,
memories, etc, cannot commit to “a creative relationship with another because of its
isolation and detachment” (88). Meanwhile, from Cederstrom’s perspective,
“Martha’s ‘drive’ to remember who she really is a way to free herself” (98). When
Martha is alone, she is able to speak to herself, as well as picking up those pieces
scattered in a world she has forgotten. Dagmar Barnouwn suggests that when
wandering alone in the street, Martha moves “towards the conscious recovery of that
space with its pictures and voices” (Lessing, RFS 120). As well as her alienated
feeling towards the outer world, Martha has no substantial feeling towards her own
body. Cederstrom mentions, Martha “attempts to find her through a sexual
relationship for she still feels that she needs a man to bring herself to life” (93).
These men have strong feeling towards their bodies for being wounded in the war;
they bring in Martha an existential feeling of her own self.

It has been observed that there exists a sense of hollowness and human cavity
that exist among the men of patriarchal society. When Jack has almost lost his life
during the war and survived, he gets a new sense of his body. He focuses his
attention on the satisfaction of his body, and thus has as a “starting-point an
experience of his body as a base from which he can be a person with other human beings” (Laing 69). He looks for women who are also suffering in their lives. Martha’s exploration of her body is more like her search for a new way to communicate with the world. Besty Draine proposes that the metaphors of sex “point to a sort of Jungian pan-psychism” and it’s like “that Jack brings to her a timeless range of sexual responses, and that she can connect these with a pool of universal energies he shares with others” (58).

Lessing manages a harmony for the existence of her women characters. She does not advocate sexual liberty for women as such but finds nothing wrong in relationships based on mutual love and respect. In an interview, Lessing remarks furiously, “I’m impatient with people who emphasize sexual revolution. I say we should all go to bed, shut up about sexual liberation, and go on with the important matters” (Lessing, PV 71). It is, in fact, emotional fulfillment rather than sexual freedom that is the main issue. The men who come to Anna and Ella are all married with wives at home to look after children while they look for sex, love and fulfillment outside marriage. Lessing in The Golden Notebook shows:

And Molly came in with: ‘Physical you say? Physical? It’s emotional. You started sleeping around early in your marriage because you had an emotional problem, it’s nothing to do with physical.’

‘No? Easy for women.’

‘No, it’s not easy for women. But at least we’ve got more sense than to use words like physical and emotional as if they didn’t connect.’

Richard threw himself back in his chair and laughed. ‘All right,’ he said at last. ‘I’m in the wrong. Of course. All right. I might have known. But I want to ask you two something, do you really think it’s all my fault? I’m the villain as far as you are concerned. But why?’

‘You should have loved her,’ said Anna, simply. (27)

Women are devoid of emotional and personal feedback from their partners. It brings the sense of exile, alienation and assimilation in women. It increases the hatred
among women for the male hegemony, home and society. In fact, Lessing criticizes the male centered ideology of patriarchal society and she idealizes the human favoured aspects like sense of equality, respectability and mutuality among all the human beings in the society.

Lessing exposes the place of women in western society, where wife’s sexual freedom is unacceptable and leads to her persecution and torture. Douglas doubts his wife’s fidelity and turns violent towards her. He treats her brutally when he learns that Martha has been mixing with Air Force men in his absence during war. In order to occupy herself in some constructive work, Martha has joined ‘Help for Our Allies Committee’, where she comes across an active member of the group, William. She is drawn towards him and openly moves around with him in Douglas’s absence. Douglas feels that Martha is ignoring him and their daughter Caroline for the sake of her lover and is filled with jealousy. He expresses his anger by physically abusing her, grabbing her wrist and twisting it. One night when she comes late after attending a meeting of the group, he loses his temper and pounces upon Martha:

‘Tell me, Martha—did you sleep with him, did you?’
‘No, I didn’t.’
He repeated it; she repeated it. She fell off to sleep again. Again she woke up in the dark, to hear that persistent voice, this time repeating,
‘Did you sleep with Hesse?’
She laughed. ‘No, don’t be absurd.’
He went through a list of names. (Lessing, PM 351)

Martha is aware that Douglas too has been involved in “dozens of love affairs”(Lessing, PM 190) at his place of posting. But being a woman, she has no right to question the man’s fidelity. Lessing attacks double standards, jealousies and opportunism in man-woman relationship and finds these tendencies destructive for harmonious relationships.

All the women protagonists want to be recognized as complete individuals in their own rights. To attain individuality and independence, Martha rejects this “feminine mystique” which glorifies only the physical beauty and utility of women.
She does not want to be “applauded only with the hypocrisy of cheap sentiment” (Segal 5). Martha, further, does not want to identify herself with her husband or become merely an appendage to him. For that reason, she has no liking for Mrs. Maynard or Mrs. Talbot or women like them who enjoy the status and wealth of their husbands. She finds satisfaction in being “unique, individual and altogether apart from any other person,” (Lessing, RFS 31) a condition which is essential for achieving self-reliance. Martha, a seeker of freedom, feels concerned for the poor blacks in Rhodesia and joins the left group to help the oppressed.

Doris Lessing criticizes the institution of marriage which is perpetuated on the norms of the patriarchal society. She prefers individual and personal affiliations to marriage rather than the social ones. She calls it an encroachment on woman’s “precious privacy” (Lessing, PM 51). Martha soon realizes that she has made a “foolish mistake” (Lessing, PM 51) by getting married. She feels bored, “caged and trapped” as if “nets were tightening around her” (Lessing, PM 59). This awareness gradually leads her to a state of conflicting emotions which is aggravated by people’s pressurizing influence on her to remain “properly married” (Lessing, PM 71).

In *A Ripple from the Storm*, after her second marriage to Anton Hesse, Martha again feels uncomfortable and resentful because of the possessiveness in him. She again feels “caged and hemmed in” (Lessing, PM 123). This relationship also turns out to be a fiasco. Being a “free spirit” (Lessing, PM 123), she finds comfort in the thought that she can revolt anytime against the tyrannies of “male authority” (Lessing, PM 123). Lessing seems revealing the brave and courageous attitude towards the worldly things.

Lessing becomes a spokesperson of the issues of women which relegate them to be secondary or inferior to men. She focuses on growing consciousness among her women protagonists. They get over the social ideologies which have created the difference between two sexes apparently. In *A Ripple from the Storm*, Lessing presents, “a type of woman who can never be, as they are likely to it themselves”
(54). She adopts a style, language, structure and theme show her as an individual self. Lessing presents:

She lives with the empty space at her side, peopled with the images of her potentialities…creating her, allowing her to be her real self, since it is his conception which forms her. Such a woman is recognizable often enough not by her solitude but the variety and number of her acquaintances and friends with whom she may be intimate…. (RFS 55)

By changing the images of women, Doris Lessing presents the suffering bore by women in the different circumstances and levels of life. Through all this, it changes them from the suffering women to the assertive ones, redefining selves and defying traditional and patriarchal mores.

In The Golden Notebook, Lessing develops a new style and pattern which concentrates on her women characters fighting against the social and patriarchal ideologies. Mona Knapp comments, “Lessing is a committed, and therefore a challenging writer. She may well irritate those who do not share her passionately-held views. Her The Golden Notebook will cause many to feel that she protests too much” (210). Indeed, Lessing comes to be very critical about her book. If it were coming out in 1973 for the first time it might be read and not merely reacted to:

Things have changed very fast. Certain hypocrisies have gone. For instance, ten, or even five years ago -it has been a sexually contumacious time- novels and plays were being plentifully written by men furiously critical of women... But these attitudes in male writers were taken for granted, accepted as sound philosophical bases, as quite normal, certainly not as woman hating, aggressive or neurotic. It still goes on, of course – but things are better, there is no doubt of it. (Preface to GN IX-X)

Anna Wulf seems as Virginia Woolf, “…with whom both Anna and Lessing share a commitment to writing, a desire for a solitary room in which to write, and an inclination towards madness” (Pickering 93). Through The Golden Notebook, Anna
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calls herself, ‘New Woman’. She is concerned to form a dialogue between self and society.

Lessing shows the social expectations of the society from women. Mary’s life starts to revolve around the restricted approach of society towards women. As Mary leads the life of an independent town girl, the society expects her to quit that role and assume a new one that suits her age. When people get to know that Mary desires a man of her age or older than her. Lessing presents their reaction:

But when people heard it they nodded and laughed as if it confirmed something they had known for a long time. A woman of thirty behaving like that! They laughed, rather unpleasantly; in this age of scientific sex, nothing seems more ridiculous than sexual gaucherie. They didn’t forgive her; they laughed, and felt that in some way it served her right. (GIS 43)

In fact, socially, Mary is expected to become a wife and then a mother. She cannot do this because, deep down, “she suffers from matrophobia”(Rowe 73), and because her sexuality is impaired by her childhood trauma, namely her untimely exposure to sex. This intricate interplay between her familial background and the harshly demanding attitude of her social environment forces her into marrying anybody “literally to save face among her friends” (Rowe 75). Then, she meets Dick Turner. It might have been anybody. Or rather, it would have been the first man, she meets, who has treated her as if she were wonderful and unique. “She needed that badly. She needed to restore her feeling of superiority to men, which was really, at bottom, what she had been living from all these years” (Lessing, GIS 44). Social implications are totally injudicious against woman, ignoring the heartiest desires of woman as a competent human being.

Through her unique narrating techniques and the character’s self-analysis, Lessing portrays a psychological world of the modern free women. She follows the views of Mary Wollstonecraft that, “I do not wish them (women) to have power over men, but over themselves” (69). About the concept of power and freedom, Margaret
Laurence says, “If freedom is, in part, the ability to act out of one’s self-definition, uncompelled by fear or by the authority of others, it is also a celebration of life and of the mystery at life’s core” (qtd. in Sinha 61). Anna and her friend Molly seem to be conventionally ‘emancipated’, particularly in the areas of sexual morality and their ability to move freely through what is always an explicitly masculine world. Anna and her friend Molly want to lead a free lives:

‘Anna, what has got into you?’
‘You mean you’ve never felt that awful moral exhaustion, what the hell does it matter?’
‘It’s the way you talk. It’s new.’
‘I daresay. But it occurred to me—if we lead what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men, why shouldn’t we use the same language?’
‘Because we aren’t the same. That is the point.’

Anna is, in every accepted social sense, free from financial pressures and domestic ones, from the blindly accepted restrictions of conventional morality, from traditional class-definitions, from inarticulateness, ignorance, stupidity. In the male-dominant culture, men have conflicts in their interests. Women look for security and protection while men refuse the role which women entrust on them. Anna has realized this divergence and knows that the pains she suffers can never be remedied as the problem can never be solved.

In order to maintain or acquire self-definition to become an independent person both spiritually as well as externally, men need to understand the essential human needs of their women partners as well. In the modern society, women need men’s understanding as well as sincerity. Upon this foundation, Anna and Saul experience joys and relaxation, and so the hatred, fears between them disappear as well. Saul admits that “men had pressure on them to be successful or get married” (Lessing, GN 44). This pressure again buttons up the strongest emotion they’ve ever
felt and disposed of it. Just as Anna says “That’s what’s wrong with us all. All our strongest emotions are buttoned up, one after another” (Lessing, GN 44). Nevertheless, the harmonious state between Anna and Saul is transient since subconsciously, both of them still fear about the “shackles” of the opposite sex. It is this fear that makes everything abnormal and ugly, and which cannot be cured by any psychoanalyst. But after all, they are making efforts to overcome thinking that they will never give up.

The social environment of the patriarchal society disturbs the mental integrity of woman. Lessing shows the multiple negotiations and restrictions of the patriarchies that determine and shape the diverse situations for the mystique of woman. Man affects the routine work and mental solidity of woman. As Anna is a prolific and moving writer, she is writing a kind of draft of the novel “The Shadow of the Third”. The protagonist named Ella, an alter-ego of Anna, is the editor of a magazine for working-class women. Ella mentions her relationship with her lover, Paul Tanner, a counterpart of Anna’s lover Michael; Ella also mentions her life with Paul, her psychological state as a woman, her sex life as well as her deep concern for her daughter, Jeannette. Ella might be what Anna wishes to be or what she believes she should be. Ella or Anna finds herself imagining this woman as a decent, non-jealous, and undemanding person who has nothing to do with Paul’s wife:

It occurs to Ella (but much later, about three years on) that this is a remarkable image to have developed, since it does not correspond to anything at all Paul says about his wife. So where does the picture come from? Slowly Ella understands that this is what she would like to be herself, this imagined woman is her own shadow, everything she is not. (Lessing, GN 193)

Seeing herself try unwittingly to project her wish onto another woman to cover her own lack, Anna/Ella comes to lose confidence as a writer in portraying people – and further, in keeping her way of life as a woman. A ‘free woman’, who is economically and socially independent woman, cannot compromise with her situations. Anna is anxious at the state of level of her life. She says that words like ‘free’ or
‘independent’ may not be appropriate for her, “...I am unhappy because I have lost some kind of independence, some freedom; but my being ‘free’ ...has to do with my attitude towards a man” (Lessing, GN 283). Disturbed by the ambiguity of what the words signify, Anna’s writing falls into a slump. She abruptly stops writing “The Shadow of the Third” and starts her notes for the short, random pieces of fiction. In the third section of the yellow notebook Ella, with her frustration worsening, falls back increasingly on the happy and healthy figure of a woman, a product of her wish, who preserves her integrity.

Lessing presents the sense of expression in her women protagonists. Mainly, in The Golden Notebook, where her Free Women, Molly, Anna and Ella or in the different notebooks permeate into spoken words as well as written ones. When Anna discusses with her comrades in the party on Linguistics by Stalin, she is suddenly possessed by a sense of cavity among the other members of the party:

Words lose their meaning suddenly. I find myself listening to a sentence, a phrase, a group of words, as if they are in a foreign language, the gap between what they are supposed to mean, and what in fact they say seems unbridgeable. I have been thinking of the novels about the breakdown of language like Finnegans Wake. (Lessing, GN 272)

When Anna thinks that “what the languages are supposed to mean” is not equal to “what, in fact, they say” (Lessing GN 273). She also detects that this insurmountable gap is caused by “the thinning of language against the density of our experience” (Lessing, GN 273). While the gap between the word and real experience prevails in male-female conversation and the discourse of the Communist Party, Anna is, as a writer, mainly concerned about the gap in the written words. She loses confidence in the mimetic power of language:

It was then I decided to use the blue notebook, this one, as nothing but a record of facts...I am increasingly afflicted by vertigo where words mean nothing. Words mean nothing...and immediately the words dissolve, and my minds starts spawning images which have nothing to do with the words...So I can’t write any longer ...for words are form, and if I am at
In fact, Anna has taken another method for getting closer to her experience. She has developed four notebooks which compartmentalize her own daily life, dividing neatly her experience into four aspects before making it whole. The black notebook is “to do with Anna Wulf the writer”; the red notebook is to be “concerned with politics”; the yellow notebook is where she “makes a story out of her experience; the blue notebook is “to be a diary” (Lessing, GN 418). However, her attempt is criticized by Tommy, who asks her:

‘Why the four notebooks? What would happen if you had one big book without all those divisions and brackets and special writing?’
Anna replies, ‘I’ve told you, chaos,’
He further questions, ‘Are you afraid of being chaotic?’ and blames her for being irresponsible…
He continues to dispute, ‘…And you aren’t even honest enough to let yourself be what you are, everything’s divided off and split up…you take care to divide yourself up into compartments. If things are a chaos, then that’s what they are. I don’t think there’s a pattern anywhere, you are just making patterns, out of cowardice’. (Lessing, GN 247)

Anna tries to put her daily life in order to divide it into the four notebooks. Although, she keeps writing in the notebooks in spite of Tommy’s impeachment. In fact, Anna’s efforts of keeping her four notebooks present the tremendous feelings of individuality and existence. It exposes the catatonic status of women in the social bound. All these notebooks exhibit the struggle of women to overcome the constricting dilemma of prefixed gendered definitions and behavioural norms. Along with this, it demands for more meaningful and companionable relationship between men and women.

Lessing presents that all the four notebooks reveal the status and struggle of women in the patriarchal society. The diary in the blue notebook, dating from 1950 to 1954, naturally contains the descriptions of daily events, uneasiness about the
Party; skepticism in her life as a woman and as a mother; her relationship with men and the meaning of writing a novel. Anna calls it an attempt to “write down simply what happens in real life” (Lessing, GN 77). She exposes the feelings of women about sex, about men and society. The image of the ‘New Woman’ and her quest for identity, her determination to realize personality and to achieve self-definition through life, growth and experience convincingly portray the real image of womanhood in the patriarchal society.

Anna is determined to present her sentiments on her different issues precariously and without any order. Importantly, she brings out the real stance of womanhood. She collects the daily routine experience of woman. Her efforts of preparing food, nursing the kids, clothing, working in the office, idealizing the committing image of woman are nicely woven in the different notebooks. All these notebooks are characterized by confusion and disorder, in which real life and dream, human kindness and cruelty, dialogue, sex, and daily chores coexist. From this entire chaos, Lessing exhibits the new sensations and strong perceptions of humanity in the golden notebook. She narrates the ideal order for human world which stems the equality and individuality for all the human beings.

Doris Lessing enriches her women with the sense of empathy. Martha’s sense of self is so blurred that she starts to hear others’ thinking in their minds. Pickering suggests that “as centre of the house, Martha becomes so attuned to the other inhabitants she begins to ‘overhear’ what some of them are thinking” (81). Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis explains:

Martha’s ability to telepathies, is not exalting irrationality or celebrating women as telepathic goddess, but calling into question the whole Western enterprise of scientific rationality as a defining element in that feudal, patriarchal Eurocentric order which was transported to the colonies and which subordinates women by dividing them into separate functions that serve the male order hostess, legal wife, sexual partner, biological mother. (56)
Martha not only crosses the boundaries between herself and others, but also crosses the boundaries between her every confined roles. Martha decides to company Mark’s wife, Lynda in the basement, where Lynda is allowed to be mad, and to be herself, “the location being symbolic of the depths she has to plumb” (Whittaker 57). Even though Martha has the experience of hearing others’ minds, she does not really have the psychological breakthrough. Martha’s ability to understand the individual consciousness is related to a “collective consciousness” (Whitaker 58). The impetus of this ability directs the person towards an acceptance of a realm of higher consciousness.

In fact, the stance of empathy is a feature of one’s personality. But, patriarchal society condemns it when it is received by any woman. Lynda is the victim of this belief. Her ability to know the desires of others is counted as illness and sent to mental hospital. R.D. Laing presents the restricted view of the society in The Politics of Experience in which the society prefers “normal” (1) being. Laing says “madness need not be all breakdowns. It may also be breaking through. It is potentially liberation and renewal” (45). Maurice Clanston views, “the psychic experiments in the basement”, are “the individual counterpart in the narrative of the broad socialist movement” as well as “its subterranean gender component” (58). Martha starts to get rid of those “controlling movement” and “controlling words” (Lessing, FGC 538). Martha feels like going into the world of Lynda, even to be “part of Lynda” (Lessing, FGC 538). Martha realizes, “Lynda is one part of the world; she could be any woman on the street, or even Mrs. Quest” (Lessing, FGC 539). When Martha walks out of the room and listens to Mark’s words, Martha starts to understand “every word had a weight to it which compelled attention” (Lessing, FGC 539). People usually use them wrongly then words lose their “real sense” (Lessing, FGC 539). Lessing focuses on the intellectual growth of her female characters. Lessing says:

Martha understood…Like ‘Mad’, repeated in crescendo: mad, mad, Mad, Mad, Mad- which Martha understood perfectly. Yet while Lynda meant just this occasional word as her bridge across to Martha, Martha was, whether looking at Lynda or listening, able to understand Lynda, what
Lynda was at the moment, by everything, s whole, the sight, sound, smell, the feeling of Lynda (FGC 539)

Martha Quest senses that the society wants to blur the abilities of woman which is a distinction to her personality. But, patriarchy snatches every opportunity from women to become the best in society. Lynda is a victim of such psychological discrimination. Through the ability of empathy, Doris Lessing presents the psychological strength of women. At the same time, a social revolution against women is witnessed when the conventional ideology prevents women to view the world with the intellectual and psychological determination.

Lessing provides one more distinctive feature to her women protagonists that they can adapt all circumstances, situations or roles given to them but throughout this, she does not compromise on gender and sexual differences. Lessing presents Mary as “adapting herself sensibly and quietly to any occasion” (GIS 38). However, even if she seems to have an active social life with a lot of friends around her, the possibility remains that it is superficial. She has a subtle but profound fear of contact with people, which urges her to make her life busy in order to conceal and forget her own inner fears. Supposedly because she senses, consciously or unconsciously, her own difficulties regarding personal relationships, she favours “the friendly impersonality of her work” (Lessing, GIS 35) as well as “impersonal casual friendship” (Lessing, GIS 45). Only at the end of her life does she give insight for the first time into this ontological anxiety of her own, “But what had she done? And What was it? What had she done? Nothing of her own volition. Step by step, she had come to this, a woman without will” (Lessing, GIS 195). She cannot have any motivation within her daily activities, but she does what other people want her to do; what she wants is no more than to adjust to the world surrounding her.

Doris Lessing presents the psychological solidity of women protagonists and achieves emancipation over the different circumstances that result from the patriarchal traditions and customs. Mary is agitated by a slightly sarcastic remark from her friend. Lessing shows:

‘Why doesn’t she marry? She must have had plenty of chances.'
There was a dry chuckle. I don’t think so. My husband was keen on her himself once, but he thinks she will never marry. She isn’t just like that, isn’t like that all. Something missing somewhere.’
‘Oh, I don’t know.’ (GIS 40)

Being no longer satisfied with her city life, she begins to count on Dick whom she happens to meet in a cinema and who offers her a way out of the city’s already uncomfortable life. This is also the case with Dick; he loves his farm and the work there, but he has also been tired with his lonely and poor life, and has been pursuing a woman to live with him and provide a way out of his miserable existence. Both Dick and Mary attempt to overcome the struggles of their own lives and their relations function as a device for escaping the hopelessness of each. In fact, there is a certain strength deep inside that every protagonist has and that women are courageous and claim their own lives and possibilities. Her women encounter a kind of mirror which forms the emancipated reflection and grasp the happiness which a woman has every right to achieve. Mary works day and night equally to man and proves herself a committed being.

All the women protagonists have developed a zeal of learning and a sense of awareness among women characters on the different level and status of life. Watkins proposes, “now Lynda’s quest becomes Martha’s quest to relearn the awareness and the significance of the awareness of the child;” but the achievement “depends on the conscious psychic rebirth of the adult” (132). The walls around symbolize the walls that prison them away from their real minds. Lynda’s testing the walls is actually her way of looking beyond the confinement and to “step outside, free” (Lessing, FGC 542). It is “a literal metaphor for Lynda’s testing of life’s boundaries” (Kopp 98). Lynda’s movement creates a kind of energy which had “sent Mark up to Martha, to make love,” then sent Martha to Jack just in order to make the force “be dammed, contained, held” (Lessing, FGC 533-34). Most people only transform the energy into the act of sex. It is the moment that Martha confronts with the unconsciousness world, including the negative and positive parts. This force, from “the impersonal sea” could “become the thousand volts of hate as easily as it could become love”
(Lessing, FGC 544). In fact, Doris Lessing creates the kind of curiosity among her women protagonists to understand their history, their roles and their place in the society.

In their quest for self realization, each woman protagonist breaks free of the religious and social codes that circumscribe and undermine her spirit and deny individual identity. Lessing’s women reach out to define the self in an attempt to associate themselves to the impersonal and godly existence. E. Ann Kaplan analyzes it as “Impersonal, ’ of course, is the essential word. And it defines, at the last, the relationship of human being to human being, and human being to nature” (548). Women start to develop their sensual abilities. Lynda has lost the parts of her ability when she suffers from the hospital. Lynda realizes that people invent machine to restrict themselves although they have every different kinds of ability in their minds. When Lynda has the self-absorbed murmur in the hospital, the nurses and doctors always take the process as hallucination. The whole constitution of hospital only “want machines, they don’t want people” (Lessing, FGC 551). After this period of life, Martha senses the truth of emotions and process of modern world.

For Martha, human beings are transformed into a kind of creature that have decayed organs and are equipped with many artificial things and perverted to what they naturally should be. Through Martha, Lessing points out the women who have forgotten their true selves. When Martha walks out the basement, she is like a new born baby and realizes that they are human beings who confine themselves to the restricted realms of life. The environment she lives in is formed of patriarchal norms. However, people just ignore that. People live “in a condition of sleep-walking they were not aware of themselves, of other people, of what went on around them” (Lessing, FGC 555). They are “essentially isolated, shut in, enclosed inside their hideously defective bodies, behind their dreaming drugged eyes, above all, inside a net of wants and needs that made it impossible for them to think of anything else” (Lessing, FGC 556). Draine also elaborates this idea that Martha is aware that “it is possible for individuals to share the same ‘wavelength’ or to tap into each other’s stream of thought, these electrical images mix with images of electronic communication” (58). And she realizes that she used to be one of these weird
creatures. Now Martha would rather choose to be mad instead of being ‘a lump of lethargy’ like everyone, being not aware of a real world.

Patriarchal society does not allow women to go and work equally to men. Betty Friedan views, “For women to have full identity and freedom, they must have economic independence” (TFS 384-385). Katherine Bliss also exclaims:

Women were barred from “profitable employment” and did not receive equitable pay. They noted that women were excluded from the professions of theology, medicine, and law, and claimed that all universities were closed to females. In addition, a double standard of morality condemned women to public obloquy while exonerating men for the same (sexual) misdeeds. (10)

Since financial independence is necessary to seek security and liberation, Martha puts in all her efforts to take up some job without letting her parents know about her plans. Finally she gets a job in the town, with the help of her Jewish friend Joss Cohen. Martha informs her parents about her achievement only after getting it. When Joss writes her about the vacancy in his uncle’s firm:

She-felt as if a phase of her life has ended, and that now a new one should begin; ... With Joss’s letter in her hand, she walked onto the veranda, and informed her parents, in a hasty way, that she was taking a job in town; and she hardly heard their startled queries. It all seemed so easy now.

‘But you can’t expect me to stay here for the rest of my life!’ (Lessing, MQ 90-91)

It is expected from a girl like Martha, who is bold and defiant, that she would choose a civil servant and inform her parents about the marriage ten days before their ceremony.

Doris Lessing shows that Mary, in her socially active town life as a successful working woman, comes to develop genuine friendships with man. She is “a good pal, with none of this silly sex business” (Lessing, GIS 40). “Mary’s early life in
town, after her escape from her parents’ farm is described as very happy until her self-image is shattered” (Maslen 44). Mary leads a carefree life in the town:

It never occurred to her to think, for instance, that she, the daughter of a petty railway official and a woman whose life had been so unhappy because of economic pressure that she had literally pined for death, was living in much the same way as the daughters of the wealthiest in South Africa, could do as she pleased could marry, if she wished, anyone she wanted. (Lessing, GIS 35)

The death of her father “removed the last link that bound her to a childhood she hated to remember”, and “she was free” (Lessing, GIS 36). She manages to totally detach herself from her socio-economic background and seems to have climbed one step up the social ladder, stripping herself of her inherited social positioning and assumes the role of a town girl. In fact, Mary “loved the town, felt safe there, and associated the country with her childhood” (Lessing, GIS 44). However, her sense of security is only temporary and she only enjoys this illusion until she learns her friends’ actual opinion of her. Her friends criticize her for dressing like a girl although she is older than thirty at the time “She’s not fifteen any longer, it’s ridiculous! Someone should tell her about her clothes”(Lessing, GIS 40). These implications don’t put any check on her. She keeps on living an independent unmarried life. When, she is married to Dick Turner, she proves herself a committed and dedicated wife who stands against the social discriminations of gender and class based patriarchal society.

Martha also breaks the tradition whereby a girl cannot act as the heir of parents’ home after marriage. Martha seems unsatisfied over this approach of the society. When Martha and Douglas go to visit Quest’s home, they make love there. She feels Douglas and herself as:

Heirs, whether they like it or not, of the English Puritan tradition, where sex is either something to be undergone or something to be shut out, or something to be faced and overcome for both Martha and Douglas, making love when and how they pleased was positively a flag of
independence in itself, a red and defiant flag, waving in the faces of the older generations. (Lessing, MQ 237)

She has a great love for her parents. In fact, she is psychologically attached to her parents and their home as it has been her childhood home. She does not want to lose it at any cost. Doris Lessing not only targets the treatment given to women in a male dominated society but also the different social taboos which force a girl to secondary position in society.

Lessing presents the cultural and sexual liberation of her women protagonists from the clutches of patriarchal society. In her writing, it has gained much visibility and influence. It shows the re-affirmation in new and original terms of existing values, or, where old traditions have decayed, a passionate search for new ones is surely one of the major tasks of the artists:

The most disappointing feature of fiction since the war is that so few writers have gone beyond merely stating the problems, the search hardly ever begins…and yet, one cannot help asking, when has there been an age which more desperately needed novelists to undertake the task? (Blau 233)

Lessing realizes that she must get beyond the mere formulation of contemporary problems and attitudes. That is why, Anna lives through the same years of frustration and disillusionment, and experiences the same restlessness. She has, in consequence, a clearer idea of what she is about to write. Besides discovering the problems, she always endeavors to find a solution. Therefore, the notebooks contain the seed of possibility, for they record not only fact but its imaginative reshaping. Anna’s diaries, written in these different colored notebooks, each corresponds to a different part of herself. The black notebook, which is about Africa, about her writing, about her finances, offers the truth of feeling, dominated by what Anna comes to consider her lying nostalgia for the past.

The truth of social perspective shapes the red notebook, about Anna’s relation to the Communist Party; the yellow one, for fiction, offers the truth of the
imagination; the blue, a conventional journal, provides the truth of detail. Here, language is for Anna the only conceivable means to freedom. Her experience produces dead ends, defeats touching nothing but hopelessness; yet writing about experience can redeem it. It is through this disintegration that Anna is able to discover a new “wholeness” which she writes about in the final notebook – the golden notebook. In fact, it is Anna’s effort to search for a new “wholeness” or a perfect personality after experiencing the disintegration.

Even being in the diverse circumstances of patriarchal society for women, Lessing exhibits the issues of otherness, multi-culturalism, globalization and womanhood. Among all this, Lessing concentrates maximum on the aspect of identity and self definition of women. At the end of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna hears such a new strong voice:

But my dear Anna, we are not the failures we think we are. We spend our lives fighting to get people very slightly less stupid than we are to accept truths that the great men have always known. All our lives, you and I, we will use all our energies, all our talents, into pushing that boulder another inch up the mountain. (Lessing 623)

Though, the quests on all the aspects of life turn out to be futile spirit that Lessing has entrusted to Anna. Anna comes out to be a symbol of hope. Doris Lessing has entrusted the quest for a better society in Anna. *The Golden Notebook* emerges as an ‘epic’ of the female experience who, with skepticism fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny.

Apart from the change in landscape, there is also a change in the people and their culture, from colonial apartheid Africa, Martha lands on post-war cosmopolitan London, which is a new collective for her. The quintessential British culture is apparently nonexistent and the feel of ‘home’, in which she lives, goes away from her. Instead of providing Martha with a favourable atmosphere that would help her go in search of her British identity, England gives her access to an overwhelming universality. South Africa had never been her home, but where is it in England (about which her parents were so nostalgic)? That remains the overwhelming
question of The Four-Gated City. Meditating on the filthy banks of the river Thames, Martha bitterly perceives the grim ugliness of the whole situation:

And it was so ugly, so ugly: what race is this that filled their river with garbage and excrement and let it run smelling so evilly between the buildings that crystallized their pride, their history. Except, she could not say that now, she was here, one of them; and to stay. (Lessing, FGC 143)

The fusion of the personal with the general and impersonal is the most notable narrative shift here. It is, in the first place, an effect of the movement to the inscrutable, muddled life of the metropolis, or as Krouse puts it, “Martha is meant to grow into a being who achieves a universal, absolute wisdom through access to the universal, not through development of the particular” (144). She, now, has got to know the reality of this world.

Lessing makes Martha acquire a visionary insight at the end of The Four-Gated City, when Martha realizes that there is no use in looking for answers anywhere but within the mind. She says, “She thought, with the dove's voice of her solitude: Where? But where. How? Who? No, but where, where...Then silence and the birth of a repetition: Where? Here. Here. Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been ever”(89). Clare Sprague is of the opinion that The Four-Gated City closes with the excitement of science fiction prophecy. She says, “The ending of the novel has its own surprise, a resonance an a beauty rare in Lessing, one suggesting long melodic arcs of time reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts” (191). Anna’s problem, her writing block, leads her obviously enough to a psychoanalyst, an interesting woman doctor, whom Anna and Molly call Mother Sugar. The sessions with her expose both private and public neuroses. In fact, Doris Lessing “grasps the connection between Anna Wulf’s neuroses and the public disorders of the day” (Sparks 56). The artist’s sensibility as a mirror for our time has been explored by many modern writers and this exploration has become one of the mainstreams of the modern novels.

Lessing shows that the world has changed so much. Now, it is a world with nations, systems, economic blocks, hardening and consolidating; a world where it
would become increasingly ludicrous even to talk about freedom, or the individual conscience. One finds one’s self shut in, besieged, surrounded by madness, frustration, sickness, inadequate, furtive sex, gated with hyena-like journalists howling outside, with nuclear bombs in production, with marches and countermarches, with threats always looming under such a chaotic environment. In order to some one’s self and dignity, an individual has no choice but to remain alienated and isolated from this turmoil day after day, which in turn leads to further psychological problems.

Social environment is very crucial in encouraging an individual to develop his or her personal self. Social constraints and other restrictions minimize the growth of an individual. Ironically, “the maximum effect that has occurred, it is to the female sex” (Hunter 186). The social roots for each country, state, society, area, group, etc differ, especially when it comes to women. She has been put under restrictions in different restrictions on freedom around the world as with veil custom, burka regulation, class division and liberty. Similarly, in Africa, racial conflicts among whites and blacks enlarge the problems for women and restrict their area of growth and general development as human beings. There are no issues or conflicts with blacks on the part of white women. But, undoubtedly, male dominated patriarchal society makes a graph of regulations for women’s behaviour with black people. It minimizes the personal liberty of women. It limits the social, economical and psychological liberty of white women being in the white male dominated society. Woman has to suffer at all corners of life. But, during all this, Doris Lessing’s woman not only gets over all the opposite circumstances but comes out to be a goddess. She struggles and fights throughout to achieve a harmony among all the diversities.

*The Grass is Singing* depicts the failure of humanity between a white woman and her African male servant. Their relationship between the ‘poor’ white woman and the native never allows them to be comfortable with each other, though they want it desperately. Lessing in her *African Stories* narrates, “colour prejudice is symptomatic of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun”(8). Several critics have
written about Lessing’s interest in empathy, which enables her characters to be more humane than other people living in the society. It makes them capable to understand the feelings of blacks and Jews in the African and English society. Green discusses Lessing’s understanding of ‘imagination as empathy’ (22) and the “empathic receptiveness of her characters” (221).

Lessing exposes the male psychology of her time that white woman should not be allowed to go out and interact with black people. The uneasy and defensive behavior of Martha Quest, Julia Barr and Mary Turner shows the narrow psychology on women. In *Landlocked*, the integration is more global and abstract. Lessing says:

> The soul of the human race, that part of the mind which has no name, is not called Thomas and Martha, which holds the human race as frogspawn is held in jelly-that part of Martha and of Thomas vas twisted and warped, vas part of a twist and a damage. She could no more dissociate herself from the violence done her, done by her, than a tadpole can live out of water. (202)

In fact, the superior attitude of the white is expressed in numerous ways in Martha’s experience. Realizing the highly emotional irrational attitude of the whites towards the natives especially towards a potential native uprising one, Jeannette King views:

> White occupation…there has been nothing like this well organized though illegal strike, panic stricken whites who unreasonably assume it is a revaluation, talk and behave in completely uncivilized ways, suggesting a solution the imprisonment or deputation of the strike leaders instead of mere talk. (340)

White landowner reports that no racial disturbance will have occurred in the cities if the natives have not been taught to read in the cities such as Zambesia.

The white women deny to accept the racial ideologies of Southern African society. Mary Turner does not appreciate the racial conflicts in society. Mary’s attitude towards a black servant Moses is kind for his hard work at the farm house. It becomes the central aspect which differentiates white woman and white man. As
later, she emerges as humanitarian and forgets the colour bar created by Southern African society. Their relationship turns into a personal one and it becomes extremely complicated for both of them to live together at one place:

What happened was that the formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress and servant, had been broken by the personal relation; and when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being, his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip. (Lessing, GIS 152)

In fact, Mary’s obsession concerning Moses slowly makes her go mad. It is important to consider the fact that she has virtually no one to talk to, not even Dick who does not understand her emotions. As she becomes more and more passive, the inferiority towards her husband becomes evident. Dick talks to her “like a superior to a subordinate” (Lessing, GIS 155).

Social and psychological implications on women characters lead women to the social cage ‘home’. Eva Hunter, in *Marriage as Death: A Reading of Doris Lessing’s The Grass is Singing* posits, “*The Grass is Singing* ‘suggests that within the white community which sees itself as a vanguard of civilization, the pressure on women to fulfil the role of moral guardians is particularly heavy’” (141). According to Bigsy, “the ‘domestic sphere’ is the starting point for a materialist South African feminism. For poor white women, Bigsy explains, this is where they begin to work to establish themselves as part of the ‘privileged white working class’” (161). The domestic, then, is also a site of transgression, as white women are in close contact with black men and women. The patriarchal society never allows women to interact with the black people. Jean Pickering gives his views:

Doris Lessing works both within and beyond the colonial experience. She understands the rigorous limitations of colonial society which is formed and kept cohesive by maintaining its narrow boundaries. But she has also achieved the feat of imaginatively stepping outside its borders….(33)
In fact, Lessing does not bind her women to any of the social or colonial bounds. It enables her women to see beyond the false colonial myths of white superiority and the necessity of blacks and whites remaining separate. Lessing’s women are conscious of their overall development. Whittaker remarks, “…appropriately, for she has always been engaged in the process of making herself homeless, of leaving, of moving on” (34). Martha emerges as a new ‘home seeker’ which is made of sisterhood, brotherhood and humanity, free from all the social implications.

Doris Lessing’s women protagonists are aware of their sexual deprivation by the society and it would be a mistake to subsume class to considerations of sex in her writing. Mary has got very little authority as woman. It makes her feel powerless. The only power, she enjoys is that as a white mistress, she is the mistress of her African servants. At this point, the question of sexuality and race, complicated by class, effect on the lives of women, needs to be considered. Michael Thorpe, among others, remarks that Lessing herself does not give adequate insight into Mary’s desire for Moses:

How physical this relationship becomes, the text never tells us; there is no reason even to suppose Lessing herself ‘knows’. If she is writing from within her character, a credible interpretation is that Mary’s derangement is not the consequence of her breaking the ultimate ‘taboo’ but rather an unconscious evasion of the step her forbidden desire would take if it could. (12-13)

Critics like Eva Hunter and Jean Pickering have complained that it is difficult to discern Lessing’s position on this, and that she assumes, most obviously, the perspective of ‘the social contexts’.

The social implication, of white society that white women are not allowed to have relations with black people, seems forsaken in the case of Doris Lessing’s novels. She is free to describe the personal moments with Moses in her novel *The Grass is Singing*. There are several indications of a sexual or, potentially sexual relationship between Mary and Moses. As she watches Moses bathe, the language is charged with sexual ambivalence, “Remembering that thick black neck with the
lather frothing whitely on it, the powerful back stopping over the bucket, was like a goad to her” (Lessing, GIS 177) Later, when Tony Marston watches Moses dressing Mary, the narrator remarks, “The attitude of the native was of an indulgent uxoriousness” (Lessing, GIS 230). Mary remains, however, ambivalent about sex and sexual desire until the end of her life. From an early age, Mary, like every woman in South Africa, is forbidden to walk out alone because “they were nasty and might do horrible things to her” (Lessing, GIS 70). Mary has been acculturated in her fear of the ‘black peril’. And, Homi Bhabha points out in his discussion of “the stereotype, fetish and phobia inform white people’s perception of black people” (98).

Much of her sexual ambivalence is centered on her view of the body. Dick, for instance, “was flesh and blood, and thereof rather ridiculous’, unlike ‘the creature of her imagination whom she endowed with hands and lips but left bodiless” (Lessing, GIS 67). There are several features of Mary’s sensual repression, which she sees embodied in Africans:

> Labour, maternity, sexuality and skin…As a white woman in Southern Africa, regardless of her class, Mary is expected to relinquish most housework and all physical labour to her African servants…It is firm routine in the society…. (Sage, DL 239-240)

In fact, Mary’s repugnance for the bodies of African labourers accords with this cultural expectation. Though, for her, it has been hard to follow. So, her relations with Moses may be assumed of this social phenomenon.

Lessing dislikes the feelings of superiority among whites for their white skin. All of her women protagonists have an opposite feelings for the coloured people. Richard Dyer discusses the “instability of white as a skin colour” (159). Variations of skin colour, he explains, “indicate gender and class differences, white women are supposed to be lighter than white men, and upper class people lighter than working class or poor people” (qtd. in Davidson 57). Dick observes, “she was looking worn, with a curious puffy look about the eyes, and patches of red on her cheeks”(Lessing, GIS 163). Slater, the representative of the district, sees her as “a dried stick of a woman, her hair that had been bleached by the sun into a streaky mass falling round
a scrawny face” (Lessing, GIS 217). Mary has betrayed the myths of white homogeneity and supremacy in Southern Africa by allowing her body to degenerate and by giving control of her body to a black man. Moses takes total control over Mary both visually and physically:

She saw him smile, and watched his eyes drop to her hands, which lay on her lap trembling… His eyes travelled up her body slowly to her face, taking in the hunched shoulders, the way her body pressed into the cushions for support…. (Lessing, GIS 204-5)

It shows that for Lessing’s women, it is not the colour which is important but the source of humanity in relations. Mary is attached to Moses as he pays respect to her and later it develops into love.

A woman is sidelined when it comes of her rights as woman in the society. She is broadly highlighted when she does something following the perception of her heart. In her book Doris Lessing, Janette King argues, “Mary Turner’s ‘horror of human physicality’, aroused so intensely by the sight of natives, gradually changes, over the course of the novel, “into the kind of fascination she feels when she watches Moses washing” (12). Moses’ first physical touch, so shocking to Mary, can be seen as skin-to-skin contact that breaches a fundamental social boundary. His touch threatens not only Mary’s identity, but the identity of the entire colonial society in which she lives. In fact, patriarchal society is self-proclaimed liberty to decide what to attach with woman and what to snatch from her.

Lessing provides her women a liberal attitude towards sex. Anna, Molly, Julia, Mary, Martha all are free to fulfill their passions about sex. Kate Millet’s views, “the sexual relationship between a man and a woman embodied a political dimension—namely, the domination and conquest of women by men. The act of sex was the primary means of social control exerted by men” (54). Julia Barr, judging the oppressed nature of man, decides to follow the possibility of choice between her socially given identity as Andrew Barr’s daughter and creating a new identity for herself. However, she does not accept the idea of transcending herself; for after Jane’s departure, she decides to live her life with Roger Metland, a man of her own
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class and a symbol of security and happiness. She does not have any burden on her mind to sustain a poor relation which demands continuous sacrifice from her. She expects the same from her partner and when she does not receive the due love and regards, she rejects him in favour of other who could fulfill her desires.

All the women protagonists show their disapproval of sexual and political prejudices and colonialism in the Southern Africa. Mary’s life is fragmented between tow contradictory states. On the one hand, she longs to live her life the way she desires to live and on the other hand, she unconsciously performs the role of an object of the white hegemonic structure. Among all this, she tries to invent her own identity. She does not submit herself to the colonial powers and male’s oppression. Mary’s murder is a consequence of the threat she has formed by her unconventional behaviour to the colonized and male dominated society.

This social categorization leads Mary’s life into exclusion, isolation, breakdown and finally to death. Throughout her life, she has been a subject to the social commitments. Brownmiller believes:

Women paid a price for demanding equality with men- namely, terrible isolation or severe conflict not only with men, but with also social institutions and with the inner image of what it meant to be a woman...Every institution proved to be fatal for women…. (19-20)

Moses, the black man, comes out to be an agent of disruptive life force. Michael Thorpe remarks, “since 1903, in Rhodesia, it has been a criminal offence for a black man and a white woman to have sexual intercourse but no such law applies where a white man and black woman are involved”(12). The human relationship between a dominant man and a subordinate woman in a patriarchal system becomes problematic just because the man is black and the woman, white. Male dominated society wants woman to be, “narrow, conventional, intolerant and intensive”(Lessing, PM 42). But, Martha achieves the self realization for which she has yearned. This development is amply reflected in the relationship between Thomas and Martha.
Thus, Lessing acknowledges that the microcosmic fragmentation of the individual psyche both reflects and results in further fragmentation of the microcosmic society. “She therefore envisions a world which will survive only on the basis of a higher evolved consciousness, bringing into a harmonious focus the polarities of the self and society, consciousness and history, ethics and politics” (Badode 73). It is more than clear now, as one concludes one’s analysis of the *Children of Violence* series that Doris Lessing is concerned with the problem of survival of every individual, including the entire caste of womanhood. Apart from this, she desires to acquire an authentic and self courageous woman who is psychologically motivated and highly energetic.

Lessing also attempts to render the complex states of the human psyche. Through her novels, she points out everyday reality in a woman’s life with a tenacious insistence on simultaneously conveying the elusive, unconscious and sometimes, irrational thought processes that accompany her. It leads all the women towards alienation and division with opposite gender. They present a sense of intellectuality and morality. Martha feels a need to convey experiences beyond the range of traditional realism. She does it artistically focusing on the marginalized class of the society. She makes it clear that even marginalized and oppressed woman has the best capability to manage both the responsibility of home and offices.