Chapter – 6

Conclusion

While there are authors who devoted their lives to write intentionally about the unequal society where women do not have the same rights as men, there are also authors such as Doris Lessing who concentrates on writing only about her own experiences, both good and bad, and what she witnesses around her. The present study critically analyzes and compares Lessing with her protagonists Mary, Anna and Martha who resemble her in all aspects like an exploration of the abuse, the mistreatment of black people and the subjugation of women in pre-democratic societies, as evident in the texts. More specifically the research examines the psychological fractures caused by the dual oppression of race and gender and investigates the inner conflict and emotional turmoil experiences by both the perpetrators and victims. The study in addition proves that the female characters in the fictional world of Lessing, even though of a different race, face the same predicament with regard to the men in their society. In Lessing’s fictional societies she portrays the double oppression of women in the family and in the society and at the same time she also focuses on the white female characters in the text and the oppression that they too face. Hence, Lessing’s focus is on how all female characters are required to live according to societal expectations in Rhodesia as she lived.

Furthermore the thesis has aimed to analyze Lessing’s novels especially The Grass is Singing, The Golden Notebook and Children of Violence in terms of psychoanalysis. While doing so, the protagonists, who have several psychological problems owing to their repressed childhood experiences. Particularly in the second chapter, the thesis has
showed that Lessing has presented Mary Turner and Martha Quest as characters that have suppressed their desires and have fears to overcome it in their early life itself. Moreover the early days of Mary plays a traumatic role in her life, and due to the “repetition compulsion”, she repeats the life of her mother, though she has always evaded it. In summing up the case of Mary, the analysis has showed that her state of mind is deteriorated with the pressure of the society as well as with the practice of her mother in her family. The work has also demonstrated that this protagonist lacks the courage to face her problems from her early days makes her driven to a tragic end. Hence Mary’s failure to forget her early memories as well as to disentangle them from the collective unconscious is the cause for her confusion and disintegration.

Comparing to this view, the study has evaluated that Martha’s background influences her identity formation and her family gives her the basis from which she forms her conception of herself. The relations within her family influence her in a way that her mother becomes the dominant figure whom Martha resists, and the father remains in the background. In the beginning, the study shows that Martha’s identity formation is greatly influenced by the relationship which she has with her mother. The development of Martha’s identity and self has similar features with studies that concern motherhood and daughterhood as an aspect of female development. For example, her main fear is that she will ultimately become to resemble her mother’s ideas, and in order to avoid this she opposes her mother in every way. Thus the struggle for power between Martha and her mother is a constant force which influences Martha’s decisions in life. In order to establish an identity which she can be satisfied with, she tries to break away from her mother. Because of this Martha makes decisions which have profound effects on her
future. In addition to this, the thesis has displayed the struggle of the protagonists not only against their personal plight but also against the society they live specially in their childhood days.

In chapter three the research has described that Lessing’s novels include two major themes; Family and Love that seem to be important in feminist discourses. It problematizes the idea that family and home are women’s domains especially in their marriage life. The men in Lessing’s novels are barely ever around their own children and they do not have so much interest in their families, and the main thing is that they have one but being a real husband and father is not that important for them at all. Moreover the women in the novel are often seen as reserved and withdrawn compared to men who are more extrovert and noisy. This is particularly true when it comes to love and relationships where women often play an inferior role as it is shown in Mary, Anna and Martha.

Mary as a female character in The Grass is Singing is expected to be the homemaker while her husband is the breadwinner. Even though he is not generating a sufficient income, he refuses to allow Mary to work and pursue a career. So she faces the society which leads her to have a loveless and unwanted marriage. After marrying Dick who seems genuinely concerned about Mary’s well being, she still loses her independence and zest for life. As a married woman, she is now expected to perform certain responsibilities and household tasks. Instead of working and having a measure of autonomy and independence, she is now estimated to bear and raise Dick’s children and to be a housewife maintaining and running the household. Thus Mary’s reflection on her life after her marriage to Dick, experiences a complete personality change, leading to her dysfunction as a character.
However, Anna in *The Golden Notebook* also proves that women are not liberated completely. Maybe she succeeds in achieving wholeness eventually, but does not, however, succeed in finding a way of living, where she can have a satisfying marriage life. For instance, her love for Paul makes her change from an independent woman to once again inferior to a man. Thus the issue about power over the other sex is brought up in the novel over and over. Even though the readers notice while reading that men are the ones with the most power in society and at home especially power over their inferior and opposite sex there are actually times in the novel when female power over men is mentioned as well. On the other hand this power is an indirect power where women usually use their appearance to control the men. This proves when Anna rejects men who want and love her and instead concentrates on a man who does not love her or even notice her. But somehow she manages to make them interested in her and in that way she takes power over them. Among so many men she has engaged with, the only one who is meaningful is her lover Michael. Thus through the complicated relationships between the heroine Anna and her lovers, the study further reveals the unsatisfactory situations faced by Lessing’s heroines in the modern society and thus drawing the readers attention to the seriously imbalanced relationship between men and women.

When it comes to Martha’s surroundings in *Children of Violence*, she feels a constant tension between how she sees herself and how she is expected to behave by people in general after getting married. In her society, women are mainly wives and mothers, and this view affects her social quest strongly. She does not want to enter the role of a wife and a mother, but eventually it happens. Her main fear is that she will make the same mistakes as her parents, and her relationship to her daughter is colored by this
fear. Not even marriage offers her tranquility in the end, and finally she strives to solve her inner entanglements by leaving for England and this shows that running away from problems seems to be the resolution for her. Thus Martha is not able to find balance in her personality; instead, she struggles with the conception she has of herself, and the conception given to her by her surroundings in her marriage life.

Chapter four has revealed the fact that Lessing’s novels are powerful depiction of the survival theme in its socio-political context of racialism, colonialism and communism. For instance *The Grass is Singing* serves as the pioneering interpretation of the rebellious spirit of modern time. It deals with the weakness and evils of white capitalism and racial discrimination legitimated for the civilization of the savages. Drawing upon the commitment to African right and communism, the novel unveils the white vicious distortion of black humanity and exploitation of the native’s labor and land for the purpose of dominance and profits.

But at the same time Mary, the woman from the white community in the novel, fails to create a new self when her old self is destroyed and is therefore unable to survive on the levels of the self and society, Moses her black servant however can be said to enjoy in surviving because he is the only character in the novel who asserts his black identity through the act of violence. A comparative study of Mary, Anna and Martha suggests that for Lessing constitution of a proper self is one of the viable modalities of survival. And it is clear from the example of Mary that such modality is available neither in the institution of family nor in that of marriage in the power-oriented society. Hence throughout her life, Mary has turned for outside help to save herself. Her alienation from her inner self finds its clearest expression in her relationships with men. Instead of taking responsibility for
her own life, she expects them to save her from herself.

As an enlightened, liberal white woman, Anna in *The Golden Notebook* is scarcely involved in the fight for racial justice as other characters of Lessing who are sensitive, intelligent, and idealistic. Although party membership and activity can be a meaningful commitment, she discovers that it is too limited, too narrow in its rewards and too dishonest in its demands upon the individual. This makes her to move on to a further level of commitment that is to verbal communication through writing for a public audience.

However, the social side of Martha’s development in *Children of Violence* is shown to be shaped by her relationships with the communist group. But her decision to regain her intellectual freedom in the pursuit of Communism is also destined to fail. This insists her to immerse herself in the tumultuous atmosphere of the Left club's meetings and activities. Thus the source of disillusionment not only dampens her own perambulatory spirit but also implies that the Left Club is as ineffectively self-interested as she is. Her shrewd, alert and insatiable eye cannot be lured permanently by the shallow of the Left Club group activism. Suddenly, and without any warning, that feeling of staleness comes over her with a sort of derisive boredom. Even though she refuses to account for it, the picture of a small group of people, middle class and every one of them, having meetings, running offices, even going among the people, strike her as absurd, pathetic and above all old-fashioned. Nonetheless, the sham wind of change stimulates Martha, while the vortex of political activism incoherently sucks her in its maddening circularity.
Another aspect of Lessing’s novels which might raise some eyebrows of the readers not other than her heroines started celebrating the humanity after their self realization. This major task is clearly portrayed in the fifth chapter of the study which paves way to her protagonists to adapt themselves with the real life as men do. This reveals the fact that the heroines are willing to withdraw their demands instead of fighting against for the needs. For instance, the final part of *The Grass is Singing* is heavy with Mary’s distorted thoughts and dreams which become as a period of profound illness, haunted by nightmares which mark her final breakdown. She withdraws from her social surroundings and sleeps hours every day so as to hasten time in her waking hours. She lapses into a morbid silence and when she does speak to anybody; her words usually turn into monologue. She is completely cut -off from the world and her life centers round her hysterical dependency on Moses and her dream-world, which invades her reality. It is only at the end of the novel that Mary, in short distorted moments, attempts to revive memories from her past to understand the core of her ailment and her mind wanders incoherently. Mary’s inability to understand and to come to terms with her inner self leads to a deadlock rather than salvation. Mary’s total submission to the collective, as well as her later isolation, lead her to an abominable situation in relation to both black and white society, and eventually lead to her final destruction. Thus her inability to recognize the full spectrum of forces that motivate her, paves the way for the later disintegration of her sanity.

In *The Golden notebook*, Anna has lived through the same years of frustration and disillusionment experienced the same restlessness. Besides discovering the problems, she always endeavors to find a solution. Therefore, the notebooks contain the seed of
posibility, for they record not only facts but also its imaginative reshaping. Anna’s
diaries, written in these different colored notebooks, correspond to a different part of
herself. Moreover, the closer study shows that however different the experiences in each
notebook may appear to be, the reason for Anna’s literary and emotional block is one that
is her one-sided perception of reality. Her anxiety and dissatisfaction is intensified by her
initial inability to see that connection. The study therefore finds that although in each
notebook Anna is dealing with a different group of people in a different milieu, the same
search for equilibrium has been fulfilled only in the “Golden Notebook” segment, which
gives the novel its title. This reveals the fact that Anna as a free woman finally chooses
the way for her self-salvation, which tends her to plan at the end of the book to work in a
sort of marriage welfare centre, and to teach night classes for delinquent children. In fact,
it is Anna’s effort to search for a new “wholeness” or a perfect personality after
experiencing the disintegration. On this point of view, the study reveals the truth that
though the quests on all the aspects of life turn out to be futile, people still remains hope
for their future.

In the case of Martha, finally, she experiences psychotic phase of her own, and in
this journey she meets the self-hater in every woman, and is close to balance in hell. She
is able to defy the self-hater, and through this, she finally finds balance in her life. The
main thing she realizes is, that in order to work for her future she must accept her past as
a part of her. Before this, her goal has been fleeing her past without looking back. Now
she finally examines her life as an entity, and continues her life without any strains. Even
while leaving the Coldridge’s family the readers finds that, her motive is to please only
herself, and not to run after something that is socially acceptable. For example, in The
Four Gated City Martha is shown as an old woman living in an island with children as she has realized that the world has faced a catastrophe, and the children are the ones to save the world’s future. Therefore, Martha has reached a central role in the society, which resembles the beginning of the new world. The culmination of her identity development has characteristics the rebirth and Martha possesses features of a superhuman figure who is an ordinary human being. She is able to predict what will happen in the future and she telepathically keeps contact with other people of this kind. Consequently, Lessing shows how Martha’s character develops from adolescence to adulthood, and how she looks for answers concerning her identity, marriage and career. She eventually becomes an adult in the sense that she achieves independence and inner balance. She manages to do this by subverting the assumptions of her mother and culture in general, and she manifests the subversion by rebelling against these assumptions. As a result, Martha matures both psychologically and socially, as she is able to feel herself coherent and independent towards the end.

The study of Lessing’s novels in the research has so far exposed the truth that the basic dynamic action is the search for equilibrium in social and psychological forms in order to achieve a balance between outer and inner modes of perception. Though Lessing’s women are described as needy, clinging, and yearning for identity in their lives, she depicts them as they attain maturity towards the end by adapting themselves in the real life. While Mary, Anna and Martha have found no chance of survival as they wish they found solution in achieving balance, which gives them energy to mingle with the society. The research therefore ends with the notion that Lessing’s individuals particularly the female protagonists realize their identity and their responsibility as a
daughter, as a wife, as a mother and as a member in the social life by searching the remedy for the depression in all aspects. Then, successfully and artistically, Lessing fulfils her search for the wholeness, and achieves the unity between the form and the content through her protagonists in her novels.

Apart from the issues related to search for identification, survival in patriarchal background, dealing with the racialism and communism, there is wide scope for further research too. A researcher may attempt to have a profound study on Lessing’s fictions based on Sufi theme, which is explored in a science fiction setting in the Canopus series and may also compare Lessing with Virginia Woolf as many critics such as Roberta Rubenstein and Claire Sprague point out numerous similarities between these two. Moreover the other area which provides scope for a researcher is Dreams and Film Sequences, the special technique used by Lessing in characterization and theme presentation as it is not only reinforce the theme but also unify the seemingly disordered events. By means of carrying out a research on these topics, the readers gain new insights into her novels.