

DORIS LESSING'S CONCEPT OF A NEW WOMAN: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

Dinesh Kumar

Assistant Professor of English
Dyal Singh College, Karnal

Abstract

The social history of women is largely the story of the subjugation of women until 1800, and of their gradual emancipation thereafter. Women in the middle ages were subjected to male-domination in every class due to relatively insecure society. The patriarchal society recognized the supremacy of men in the family and assumed women dependence on men in all matters denying her freedom dignity and equality of status. In the patriarchal system, activities of women were restricted to the home and the only profession open to them was marriage "it was with a view to marriage that their mind was taught."

Keywords: *feminine, patriarchal, dependence, subjugation, equality.*

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If the familial and socio-economic structure made men the monarch of all there he surveyed, the religious mythology, too, supported the subversion of women with the illusion that god must be male. The story of genesis laid the foundation for such proposition as 'frailty, thy name is women.'

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, women emerged as personalities in cultured society, though not yet in politics. With the rise of the middle class, the status of women improved and interest and occupation were cultivated in which women could partake. The essays in Addison and Steele's Tattler, and Spectator show that they had women readers in mind.

The Golden Notebook is a powerful work of fiction where Doris Lessing rejects the plea that The Golden Notebook is a triumph for women's liberation. Doris Lessing, like Simone De Beauvoir, is impatient with the sex war and wants it over. So, this novel which makes an anger cry of women did not trump women's battle cry against men, it nevertheless, draws attention to the struggle that women are undertaking for their being considered as human beings.

The Golden Notebook leaves us more enlightened, more aware of women's position in post-war II British milieu. The form of the novel shows the post-modern impact so that the "chaos and form are inextricably bound to one another in a dialectical process, there is a subterranean undercurrent of free women written in first person narrative."

The Golden Notebook records the story of a woman, Anna, who is an artist, and thus, can better explain the problems, prospective, inhibitions, attitudes, difficulties and incompatibilities faced by a woman in general. Moreover, she is also representative of the post-war younger generation for whom all dishonest hopes expired and there were no brave cause left. She is not an isolated individual living in ivory towers, but a conscious and intelligent woman immersed in life. Her life, as an artist, suffers from a 'block' and is thus, "linked with the disparity between the overwhelming problems of war, famine, poverty and the tiny individual who was trying to mirror them."

How a person can become fragmented is the central concern of the book, The Golden Notebook where the theme is suggested at the very outset of the Anna's proclamation: "the point is....that as far as I can see, everything cracking up."

Anna Freeman is brought up in South Africa from her childhood, and she saw the discrimination against the black south Indians. As divorced women, Anna and Molly as free women, they assert, and relish their freedom but cannot help wondering whether they are really free. The greatest pleasure for Anna is that her lover is beside her in the bed and his head is upon her breast. Anna denies marriage but not men providing her emotional fulfillment.

So far as freedom is concerned, apparent freedom may be there but the meaning of the real freedom in real sense eludes the free women. Even now the status of women is associated with men as they still define themselves in terms of relationship with men.'

Richard wonders how to get an erection with the women you have been married to fifteen years. Lessing's sexual erection or organism is also associated with emotional integrity as loss of erection is loss of emotion. What is the reason of the Block for Anna? Why at a certain point of her career, she has lost the impulse to write? Tommy opens vistas about the block when he says: "you are afraid of writing. What you think about life because you might find yourself in an exposed position."

Self-expression is a kind of emotional status which metaphorically means the exposure of self before the readers. Such a self-exhibition is so characteristic of the women has to adapt according to the social pattern, if she has to adopt according to the social pattern, if she has to understand the policy, she has to learn the language of the class in authority, which is men in this context.

An interesting feature of *The Golden Notebook* is free and Frank treatment of female sexuality. The free women are uninhibited and even outspoken in discussing the psychology of sex. In this way, Anna Wulf of *The Golden Notebook*, like Rosamund Stacy of *The Milestone*, and Ruth Patchett of *The Life and Love of She Devil* define the broad parameters within which the present study tries to examine the fictional representation of women. Many labels-marxism, psychologist, anarchist, formalist, realist, revolutionist, mythoepic, socialist, and last, but not the least, feminist have been affixed to Doris Lessing's works. *The Golden Notebook* is a complex work of art that is not confined to a near feminine or feminist reading of experience, yet a feminist perspective suggests a more promising entrance into her work.

The latent and dithering notwithstanding Doris Lessing's search for a richer and fuller life for women is again manifested in Morison's ultimate flight from the matrimonial cage, and Anna Wulf's final choice of the road not taken. Anna's contemptuous condemnation of Paul's in capacity of view a women as something more than 'a sort of window dresser's dummy heap of disembodied parts, beast or legs on buttocks seems to enjoy the author's whole hearted approval.

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