

A STUDY OF GENDER ROLES AND IDENTITIES IN “THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK” FROM FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT- The basic aim of this research paper is to highlight the roles of different genders in the novel: “The Golden Notebook” by Doris Lessing. The reason to select this novel is to portray her new genre of literature writing. As a feminist perspective, the researchers have overviewed all major themes of this novel like emotional breakdown, cracks, identity crises, marriage, sexual desires, and women quest for true love, patriarchal society, writer’s block and meaninglessness of life. The writers captured the real picture of that society and in this way we can observe the identity and roles of different genders. Findings of the study reveal that gender roles and identities in this novel are the major issues in all ages and most of the times women suffered from these psychological conflicts.

Key words: Free Women, Gender Roles, Identities, Fragmentation. Psycho conflict

Type of study: *Original Research Paper*

Paper received: 25.02.2018

Paper accepted: 10.5.2018

Online published: 01.07.2018

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1 INTRODUCTION:

The present study is based on the gender roles and identities in the Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) from feminist perspective. A comprehensive study has been done for detail analysis of the novel. Many other articles and works of other researchers have been overviewed to justify my topic of research. Basically the novel *The Golden notebook* (1962) is a collection of four different coloured notebooks and then combination of writer's experiences in one golden coloured notebook. Each of notebooks is the collection of writer's different experiences of her life. She has combined these four notebooks and finally become in the form of golden notebook. She has used a new and complicated style of writing to portray her ideas in the form of writings. In this novel, she has discussed different issues of life i.e. political, personal, social and psychological one. The major aspect of this novel is feminism and identity. Dr.Sabine Picout (2004) and even Lessing herself has claimed it in an interview "*This novel was not a trumpet for women's liberation*".....And even her friends also called it "*a tract about the sex war*". They both are "*new type of women and women free like men*" (p.1). But it is true and proved that it is all about feminism. The female characters undergo drastic problems due to male pseudonym. The situations and circumstances are not in favour for women, their identities and desires are suppressed by males. The story revolves around the protagonist *Anna Wulf*. The writer has written this novel in 1st and 3rd person. It is also an autobiographical novel because both writer and Anna are divorced ladies and called themselves as *free women* because they want to live their life free without any restrictions of men. The writer and Anna both rejected traditional norms and men interference in their lives. The writer shows her dissatisfaction with male. The writer is free from martial obligations because she was divorced lady and single mother. The present

study deals with the gender roles and identities in the selected novel according to feminist perspective. According to activists it is described as *Cartesian individualism* by enlightenment philosophy and *transcendent self* by liberal humanists. According to the arguments of these schools of thought, a person or human being is autonomous, self-determined, coherent and specific unique entity. It is based on the concept of the question that who am I? The present study deals with issues of identity and gender roles in patriarchal society. It is about the paradigm of women, their emotional breakdown, and their roles in patriarchal society, their sexual, social and psychological desires according to male pseudonym.

The analysis of novel portrays many different and unique issues in the feminism boundaries. The oppression and suppression of female mentality is the major hurdle in the freedom of female. The recurring themes of the novel are cracks, identity crises, fragmentation and emotional breakdown. Women ideas, freedom, identity and desires are fragmented into different situations of life. She has introduced a new style of writing which has not been used previously. She has used a new technique in the form of four different coloured notebooks which are of black, red, yellow and blue colour. After writing her different experiences in four different coloured notebooks, she again wrote it into one notebook which is of Golden colour. It is all about her experiences in the form of autobiography. The keen study of novel overviewed many new experiences of her life. The book is portrayal of women identity, marriage disharmony, and freedom, roles of different genders, lust and hunger for sex. Her friends also called her this work as a sex war. The main character Anna and the writer Lessing both were victims of same problems, divorced ladies and unsuccessful married life. Both are single mother and took care of their child without father's affection. Bhaskhra Charya (2004) explored

that both women are called themselves as free women, free from male boundaries in patriarchal society. They called themselves a new type of women, free of men. The relationship of mother and child is not complete without father's protection (p.1) Overall views of the novel show that women are dissatisfied from men. The present study will prove fruitful to observe new features of handling and treating the psychological problems of females. The main character Anna Wulf undergoes many psychological therapies by her doctor whose name is Mother Sugar. The character of Mother Sugar is very crucial because she treated her with the theories of two famous psychologists *Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung*. In her whole life she was disturbed psychologically and tried to attain true love, a person of true sensibility and true devotion of love for her and tried to keep harmony and equilibrium in her life. For this, she has taken support of her writing. Her writing is a good consoler of her life. The selected novel is very unique in its style because the writer used novel within novel. The names of the other novels are *Frontiers of War* and *Shadow of the Third*. In 2nd novel she has used fictional characters with little bit changes similar to her real life. This shows split of her personality to show her mental conflicts. The theories of socialism, feminism and Marxism have also been implemented in this novel. The different situations, incidents, roles of power, political conflicts, and worldwide effects of war on colonized and colonizer, and behavior of British communist party with party members show diversity of different theories in this novel. So the selected novel and its most of the characters are in the dilemma of identity crises and all genders have their different roles according to their behavior, character and interaction of society. Doris Lessing has interpreted her personal traits of identity loss and the behavior of different genders to which she has faced in her life. To show her mentality and cracks of her life, she is fragmented and this thing is obvious from her writing in different coloured notebooks. Her emotional breakdown

results into her loss of identity. Her affairs with different persons moved towards true love. But her all lovers have left her. The novel refers as the need for self identity and struggles to attain place in all genders and their roles. In yellow notebook she used fictional characters and she was unable to show her identity and named different to her characters. Situations are related to her real life, sufferings are her own sufferings but with different characters. The male characters have their different way of living, lust for sex and ended at deceiving. Married men and women like Richard and Marion both married but Richard has extra sex affairs with other women. She was also in the mental dissatisfaction and nostalgia. She was in the quest of true love and identity of herself. The desire of acute sexual intimacy with many men is also a search for self identity. She was afraid because of her identity. She has repeated her name with stress in novel, "*Anna Anna. I am Anna, She kept repeating; and any way...What then am I, Anna? ...Who Am I, Anna?*"(Pg. 344)For her identity Anna struggles in her whole life to give name and meaningful relationship in her life. As a party member in communist party, this is her also striking attempt to got change in social justice. In her life she witnessed many undesirable effects of racial discrimination and become activists to do something for it. Till intimacy with Michael she has her own identity but when Michael left her she suffered from mentality and identity crises. Through this novel, Anna runs through a survey to change the mind of women in that age that raised their voices for their basic rights. The divorced ladies also changed their minds from Anna's perception of free women. They have gained their inner ability and power to reject the slavery of patriarchal society. The roles change from their cultural norms. As a feminist, perspective of Lessing's novel is differently reflected to society than any other male researcher. Women's writing suffered a lot in all ages. Owing to amendments in acts after feminism waves their way of thinking changed into

awareness. As Molly, Anna and Marion have their different interpretations about their divorce and marriages. On the other hand men's relationships like Michael, Saul, Paul, Richard and Milt has not taken serious. They just played with them as a sex doll and for their lust. They did not bother about their cracks or emotions. All genders interacted with each other; the need of one is depend on the others luxurious life. Men have to do work for their economical and financial support problems while women are required for their household activities, child birth, take care of house and to fulfill their sexual expectations. Anna is very different and divergent personality. She behaves as a mistress of her lover and as a mother of her only daughter Janet. Janet is totally dependent on her mother. She was totally in the dilemma of single mother without father. The small child is also in the problem of identity loss. That's why her life starts and moved from her mother, Anna. Anna's attention towards Janet saved her from complete and critical madness. So the novel is replete with many incidents and characters sufferings of identity loss. It's a tribute to Lessing that she artistically describes this trait in her novel. The novel is described as the best by the implementation of gender roles and identities as the feminist perspective.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

- i. To identify different gender roles in this novel in patriarchal society.
- ii. To critically analyze the identity crises and sufferings of female characters in patriarchal society.
- iii. To critically examine the detail of different coloured notebooks.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

The founding mother of feminism, Doris Lessing her first work is *The Grass is Singing* (1950). When she wrote this novel she was just about 25 years old. At her this early age she wrote about harsh realities of girl's life before marriage and after

marriage. She discussed about her feminine inner dilemma. It is the bitter picture of society especially for class strugglers and poor peoples. Its genre is psychological detective, because when story starts Mary Turner, the protagonist was murdered, after this background study started. The title of this novel was taken from T.S Eliot's poem *The Wasteland* (1922). It was about the portrayal of modern life as a land of barren. Modern life is like a life of desert and meaningless. Doris Lessing's story revolves around Mary Turner who was mentally disturbed due to squabbling relationship of her parents. *The Golden Notebook* (1962) by Doris Lessing is her superb manifestation of her literary career. It was her amazing work with new trait of writing. . The style of writing which she has used is her skills that she portrayed her characters, their sensitivity, their moving towards sanity to madness due to patriarchal norms. The quest for true loves and need for lover was the major traits of novel. This novel also reflects the political involvement in British communist party. The role of party members and their behaviors are also highlighted in the novel. The effects of wars both world war and The Cold war also affected person's social, economical and political aspects. The sociopolitical features and their relevance on their mentality was the major hurdle to change their lives. This trait Lessing has beautifully reflected in her novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962). It explores women's dissatisfaction and identity crises due to male pseudonym. Harper Collins (1999), argues that Lessing has written this novel in more advanced form and its replete with its chronological sequence, her autobiographical element and style of narrator in 1st and 3rd person (p.1). The readers are curious to read full text and they feel something new in her writing. She has also used a novel within a novel to hide her real complexities in the form of fictional characters of her own life. The cracks, emotional breakdown, identity loss, shifting from sanity to madness and identity crises due to disturbed and fraudulent role of male genders in female's life are the

hall marks of this novel. The females are divided in their role as mother and mistress of their lovers. They want to keep balance in their all roles but terms and conditions are not favorable for them and they caught in inner mental conflicts.

Hashim (2014) claims her fragmentation as the major theme of the novel. She introduced new style of writing in post modern era with unique traits of notebooks, use of novel inside the novel with fictional characters, traits of autobiography, excerpts of different sections and selected newspaper clippings. It shows her involvement and adaptation from “Chronotope”of Bakhtin. This thing terms her novel as the reflection of baggy monster (p. 3).

Fangfang (2007) states that this novel falls into two types. *Its major focus on the labyrinthine structure which possess it as confusing and pathos of problems, the secondly on the new style of feminist thinking and their status in the society* (p. 8).

Rohini (2016) said that *it is a superb piece of work that focuses on the indictment of ugly racial policies, rude behavior, troubled relationship between whites and blacks, marriage as punishment, female position in patriarchal society and identity crises of oppressed women* (P. 124). The novel is about the complex character of Mary with the themes of alienation, identity crises and class discrimination.

W. Wan Yahya (2010) described the character of *Dick is like an unsuccessful failure of life like a Wily Loman in the Death of a Salesman (1940) by Arthur Miller whose live is like a building castles in air. He lives in the world of primitivism and beliefs in his old norms and standards* (p. 5).

Foucault’s book *Madness and Civilization* (1964) has given different opinion about sanity and madness. He explores new definition of madness quite different from society. He said that it is not real madness of a person it is basically external forces and their responses on person, which effect on their behavior and thinking. The problem of identity and related problems in their life arouse due to

these external forces. In (1971) Lessing said in her novel's preface that society made women mad, as Anna and Saul moved into depth of madness due to norms of society (p. 7).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted by using different theories of feminist in literature. The present study is based on qualitative approach because in literature most of the researches are based on qualitative analysis. This method is first started by combine efforts of Freud and Piaget and for this they are called the originators of this approach. This method is very fruitful and significant in many cases because it is based on quality analysis as it is said that Analysis is more than coding. The selected topic "A study of Gender roles and Identities in Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook as feminist perspective" is based on theoretical study of the text. From this method we can get more knowledge, detailed views, exact and comprehensive results. As a feminist perspective, the main focus of this research study is to analyze and interpret the problems of female characters. The novel belongs to the era of post modern. In that era, world has become more developed and awareness of feminism has been aroused in many parts of the world. The British writer Doris Lessing has many specific traits of her unique style of writing. The selected novel is also her new attempt which she introduced. It is the new genre of literature in the form of diaries or notebooks. The writer has adopted the new version of writing and left the old conversion of writing style. But her trait shows her inner fragmented personality. The present study has approached by reading close textual analysis and writer's biography. Because the writer and protagonist have many similar problems. In west, roles of female genders and identity is important issue. The present research analyzes the female oppression, concept of free women, sexual identities and the way of thinking and behavior of female

characters and their interaction with males. The present research also observed the roles of different genders in Lessing's different colored notebooks. It is about the behavior of men with women, between two friends, mother with their kids, wife with their ex-husbands and roles of genders with societies. The main genders are Saul, Paul, Max, Anna, Molly, Janet, Richard, Marion and Michael etc. Their relationships with each other and interactions have affected their self identity. The relationship between two friends gets established to support, to help and understand each other. They also concerned their problems critically to solve their mental dilemmas. The mutual understandings between two friends console their troubles and overcome their hurdles. It is based on detailed reading of the text and reviews of different articles and features of feminist identity and gender roles.

4. FINDINGS OF STUDY

The present study analyzes the role of genders and identity in the novel *The Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing. This study is based on the most important trait of feminism which is identity loss/crises. The basic sufferings of women are to survive in patriarchal society and the quest for true love. This aspect of her personality reveal by thoroughly studying her text, she wrote in the form of diaries/notebooks, a new genre of literature writing in postmodern era. The findings of the study reveal that sexual and emotional intimacy affects women more critically from opposite gender. Lessing has used Lawrentian idea by which women can attain series of orgasm by raising sexual relationships with many lovers. The role of male gender in women life was best understood by their nature of sexuality.

5.CONCLUSIONS

To conclude above all, it is obvious that the different aspects of male genders affected her personality physically, mentally and psychologically. The main characters Anna, Molly, Tommy, Marion, and lovers of Anna have possessed new

tactics of genders. The male genders are responsible for her cracks, identity loss, fragmentation and emotional breakdown. The use of word “free women” is the depiction of their inner conflicts of identities. They called themselves free women but they are not free from social conventions, they are just free of men, their true love, and devotion and to give them identity. This was the major gap in their life conflicts and obstacles. By these gradually she indulged into madness and lost her sanity. The only person who can make her sane was her daughter Janet, just for her Anna wants to keep her senses normal.

This analysis of the text shows women responsibilities and love with their child. She also managed her time always for her lover and for her daughter. But all her efforts to avail true love and identity of male gender are in vain and she remains alone.

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Authors' contribution/Conflict of interest

This research work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author SK prepared initial draft of the manuscript, collected relevant material and analyzed it. AMAK read the manuscript, correct typing and comprehension errors. AGA gave final shape to the manuscript by formatting and editing it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. They declared no conflict of interest with any person or institution.