

FICTIONAL TREATMENT OF PSYCHODYNAMICS: A STUDY OF SELECT NOVELS OF DORIS LESSING

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The paper will focus on the psychological aspect of the selected novels and also how the female protagonists of these novels throw away the various social and stereotypical pressures imposed on them by the patriarchal society. All this becomes possible for them once their psychological exploration is complete. Although a lot has been written on the different aspects of her novels, however, this aspect of her novels have been niggardly treated by her previous critics. The need to work on them therefore arises from this critical neglect.

It would, therefore, be my endeavour to evolve a perspective as to how, psychological exploration of the female protagonists helps them to reclaim their lost identities and personal freedom.

Psychodynamics is a study of psychic energy and its workings. The first important figure to study psychodynamics was Sigmund Freud and, according to him, the basic psychodynamic model focuses on the intense interactions between the Id, Ego and Superego. It attempts to interpret mental states in terms of innate processes. Another prominent name in psychodynamics after Freud is Carl Gustav Jung. He developed his own theory and de-emphasizes the importance of sexuality and aggression as motives and put forth his division of the unconscious into Personal and Collective. After them, many theorists put forward their contributions and at present psychodynamics is a multi-disciplinary field which studies influences, responses and thought process. It also examines the capacity of mind and senses to directly affect physiological response and biological change.

Both psychology and Literature adopt as one of their goals the better understanding of overt behaviour, mental life of individuals and shows their connection with each other. The phenomenology of psyche is beautiful and variegated in both form and meaning. Psychology and will always have to turn to one another for help and one will not invalidate the other. The work of art is an interpretation of the contents of consciousness and of the electable experiences of human life. Modern age is the age of disintegration and interrogations. In early 20th century, novelists like D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, J.D Beresford and May Sinclair expressed more about human behaviour. Psychologies by William James, Henri Bergson etc framed the nature of psychic reality and its conflicts. It is through their exploration of multiple personalities, madness, and hysteria a new concept of selfhood emerged. Psychodynamics restores the importance of previous psychological discourse and generates new readings of psychological fiction. Modern

novel is psychological as it concerns the nature of consciousness and its relation with time. Modern novelists think of consciousness as not something moving in a straight chronological line but rather it is altogether fluid. In this type of novel a character's psyche is anatomised, his change in mood may mean more than his outward acts. Every detail of character is always there, in his consciousness and it is revealed by author by probing deep into his psyche. In Modern Novel emphasis is on the individual and on the inner working of human mind. It is enriched by thinkers like Freud, Jung, James, Adler and Bergson. The novelists like Joyce, Proust and Virginia Woolf are preoccupied with inwardness and subjectivity and more particularly to the deepest recesses of human mind.

In this connection Doris Lessing is no exception. Doris Lessing is a novelist, whose fiction is concerned with the issues regarding human psyche more than anything else. She is always interested in showing the psychological development of her characters. Freedom is the most significant element in her fiction and this freedom comes only after the female protagonists explore their psyche to the fullest. Doris Lessing believes that a good writer should be a good psychiatrist too. Her women characters are always in search of personal freedom and true identity. These women do not achieve self-fulfilment in the traditional roles of wife and mother. Therefore, need for freedom becomes more important to them. The focal point of Lessing's analysis is Protagonists mind, inner life and forms of consciousness. She believes that the personal growth is possible only through psychological development. Once these females, crippled by social institutions like marriage and motherhood, explore their psyche or inner selves, they question the traditional roles ascribed to them by the patriarchal society and finally shed all these constrictions and emerge as new individuals, independent of all the confinements. All this help them to attain their independent identity.

The sense of completeness sought by Lessing's protagonists often denied in the external world is found in their own psychic resources. Psychological thought contributes to Lessing's vision in significant ways so that psychic reality begins to provide a frame work to social reality and often gets manifested in her novels. Lessing was highly influenced by two prominent voices, C.G Jung and R.D Liang and like them she believes that the only hope for securing the future lies in the individual's journey back and in to his self. In her novels dreams and madness were the vehicles for the exploration of spiritual or psychic states. Almost in her all novels psychological exploration becomes the only possible refuge from the confinement on all levels and psychodynamics works at different levels manifested through her female protagonists.

In her second novel *Martha Quest* (1952), and first from the *Children of violence* series, she focuses on the psyche of her female protagonist Martha throughout the series. Martha tries to conform to the social conventions and demands concerning her role as mother and wife. But her inner self does not identify with these roles and thus her inner identity is confronted with the outside world. Her desire to liberate herself is so strong that she leaves her husband and even child without taking into consideration her responsibilities as mother and wife respectively. Similarly, *The Proper Marriage* (1954) covers years 1939-1941 in Martha's life. Martha feels trapped in her marriage and also develops a strong repulsion against her pregnancy as she fears that she will become a replication of her mother's life and finally rejects these roles only to find her true self and lost identity. In *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Lessing develops the theme of disintegration of modern society through Anna's emotional "breakdown". In this painful psychological experience, Anna breaks all the false restrictive patterns that society has created in

her. She moves through the Self's false dichotomies and divisions to "self-healing" which enables her to free herself. In her psychological action to resolve the tensions that those dichotomies have created in her, she triumphs over the destructive forces of division and thus asserts the individual's ability to achieve meaning itself. *Landlocked* (1965), is an account of her new love affair with Thomas Stern. This provided a temporary solace to her but she soon realised through a recurrent dream that her central or inner space is empty and it is only after filling this empty space that she will be able to find her real self and reclaim the lost identity.

Another novel, *The Four- Gated City* (1969), is a stunning portrait of a "free" woman. Martha has severed all ties with the collectives that once had placed restrictions on her life. She now relinquishes her public self and asserts her inner character. She moves to London and also finds a job as a secretary to an aristocratic English novelist. The question of mental balance in an imbalanced world is one that Lessing undertakes in this novel.

In the above listed novels the self-representation for the female protagonists is marked by confrontations between different ideological systems which define the terms "woman" and "Person" as mutually contradictory. All these novels are based on the self-analysis of the female protagonists viz a viz search for "free" woman which is possible only through complete psychological development or exploration.

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